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Skin Diver

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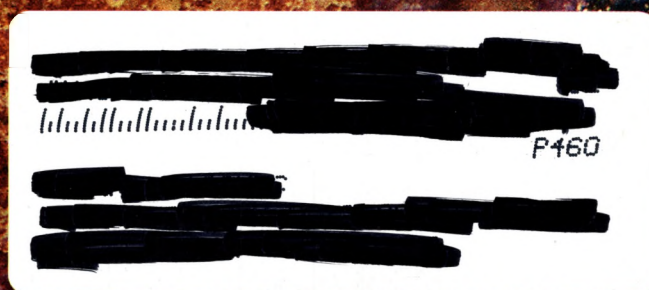
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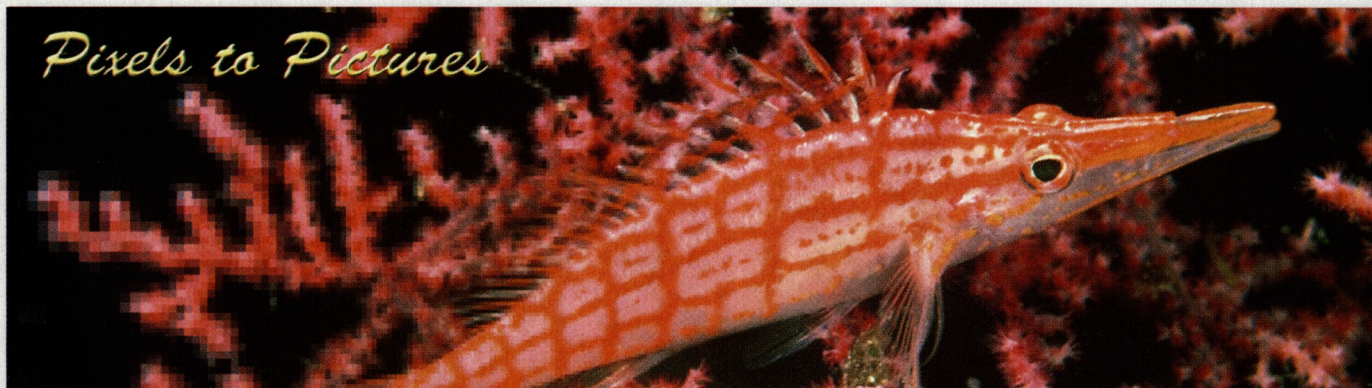
True Digital UNDERWATER Systems

Flash and the Digital Camera

Many digital cameras fire their built-in flash more than once when taking a flash picture. This happens so fast it is difficult to see — a small preflash is fired to help the camera determine focus, exposure and/or color balance. After the preflash the camera then fires the flash to illuminate the subject and the camera takes the picture.

For an external flash system to achieve proper exposure it must duplicate what the camera's built-in flash is doing. The Ikelite DS Sensor detects the light from the camera's built in flash and instructs any Ikelite Digital Substrobe to mimic the output of the camera's built-in flash.

Pixels to Pictures



DS50 Substrobe

When using an Ikelite DS50 Substrobe and DS Sensor with a digital camera there is NO TRIAL AND ERROR lighting or need to restrict the camera to the manual exposure mode. Ikelite provides true flash automation with digital camera systems that require preflash.

DS50 Specifications:

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- Weight0.6 kg - 1.3 pounds
- Guide# (ISO 100)28 (underwater)
- Coverage Angle70 degrees
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- Color Temp5700 degrees Kelvin
- Power Source4 "AA" alkaline batteries
- Flashes200 full power
- Recycle Time3.5 seconds

The **DS50 Substrobe Package** has everything you need to add external flash to your digital camera system. Includes DS50 Substrobe, DS Sensor, Flash Diffuser and Mounting Arm.



Housing shown is for
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Most housings allow use of the camera's built-in flash and/or the addition of the external Ikelite DS50 Substrobe with the DS Sensor which adds full automation to digital still cameras. Cameras such as the Nikon CP 950, 990 and 995 which provide strobe connections can use the full line of Ikelite Substrobes.

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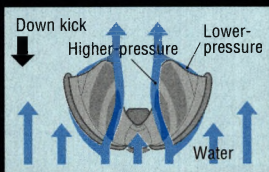
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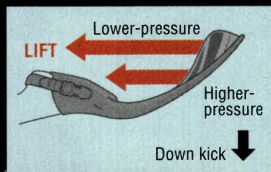
CONVENTIONAL FIN

technical specs

Traditional fins only use repulsive force to create propulsion. This normally means that in order to create strong propulsion, maximum effort is required, resulting in muscle fatigue not only for beginners, women, and middle-aged divers, but professionals as well. Added to which, the body moves left and right in reaction to the kicking needed to move forward, thus reducing propulsion.



The SF-8 has a blade that is split down the middle, so it takes the shape shown in the diagram when kicked under water. This special blade shape creates propulsion (lift) by generating a pressure differential above and below the blade, in addition to the repulsive force created by kicking. The SF-8 is a fin that allows all divers to create propulsion using only a small bent-knee kick, with a light rhythm.



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features

31 6 LITTLE BIG LIGHTS

DARYL CARSON turns you on to compact lights that lay down a big beam.

48 THE GLAMOROUS LIFE

MANDY BOLEN & CLARA TAYLOR follow six wanna-be instructors in their quest to become diving gurus.

56 IN DARWIN'S FOOTSTEPS

FRED BAVENDAM & PATRICIA DANNA discover what Darwin didn't in the Galapagos Islands.

60 LIVING LARGE

MARTY SNYDERMAN wakes up dreaming super-size in the Socorro.

62 LOST WORLDS

STUART & MICHELE WESTMORLAND partake in diving's greatest legacy: exploring virgin territory. It's Malpelo and Cocos Islands at their best.

67 DIVE ATLAS OF THE WORLD

Field Editor MARTY SNYDERMAN covers the underwater world in 17 pages with been there, *do this* expertise.

84 BATHED IN CIVILIZATION

ERIC HANAUER finds that there's much more to diving the British Virgin Islands than memories of Jacqueline Bisset in a wet T-shirt.

94 HAWAII 7-0

FRED GARTH remembers Hawaii like it is today—a frenzy of fish, bonsai waves and tropical seduction.

105 FAR & AWAY IN FIJI

Swapping out faxes for fins, MARTY SNYDERMAN says "C-ya!" and FedExes himself to Fiji.

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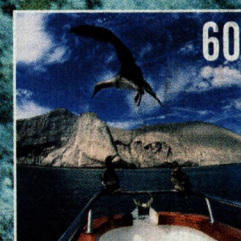
departments

- 10 EDITORIAL**
- 16 FREEFLOW** edited by Tiffany H. Carey
Diving's Latest News
- 18 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**
- 20 ENVIRONMENT** by Jean-Michel Cousteau
Nature is Good for Your Health
- 23 ASK THE PRO** by Marty Snyderman
Ports for SLR Housings: Flat vs. Dome
- 26 WRECK FACTS** by Ellsworth Boyd
The Preussen
- 28 GEAR AND GADGETS** by Ryan Allen & Daryl Carson
- 34 DIVER'S LIBRARY** by Kyle Foster
- 43 DIVE CLUB NEWS** edited by Ryan Allen
- 44 TOTALLY TEK** by Karl Shreeves
I Want My Spare Brain
- 46 SKIN DIVER ONLINE** by Daryl Carson
Win a Free Trip!

- 54 BLUE ADVENTURES FOR KIDS** by Wyland
Fear of Sharks
- 113 TRAINING** by Ken Kurtis
Navigation Made Easy
- 114 MILESTONES** by Scott D. Jones
Our Ongoing Celebration of the Past
50 Years of Diving
- 127 ENCOUNTERS** by Ned and Anna DeLoach
with Paul Humann
The Titan Trigger
- 128 SCUBAMED** by Fred Bove, M.D., Ph.D.
The Throbbin' Noggin
- 129 TIME CAPSULES** by Tiffany H. Carey
- 130 I LEARNED** by Randy Everette
Anchors Aweigh

directories

- 107 Travel Guide**
- 110 Overseas Divers' Directory**
- 115 Advertiser Directory/Skin Diver Link**
- 116 Internet Directory**
- 118 Marketplace**

**ABOUT THE COVER:**

Academy Award nominated songwriter, Carol Connors finds inspiration on a Fijian reef.
Photo/David Fleetham

Background photo: Above and below in the
Hawaiian Islands.
Photo/James D. Watt

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS Lush green islands lapped by Caribbean blue waters—it's no wonder the BVI has trance-like beats running through Eric Hanauer's head. He explored the *Rhone* and the *Chikuzen*, learned the art of playing hide-and-seek with pipehorses, and came to terms with the fact that some of the best dives happen after you run out of film. Get into the groove on page 84.

FIJI A scatter of islands out in the South Pacific has people jumping out of the run-or-get-run-over lifestyle of the digital age, and jumping into a pool of pure bliss. Here, Killer Whales slide onto their sides to get a good look at you, and belie their vicious moniker. It's an experience that will turn your digital present into the distant past. Go far and away in Fiji on page 105.



GALAPAGOS ISLANDS It's the Ford Modeling Agency of the underwater world. Meet your models: Marbled Rays, sea lions, Whitetip Reef Sharks—all primed and primed, eagerly awaiting their photographer. Grab your film and burn through rolls between live-aboard jaunts in the islands that left Darwin scratching his head. Ready, set, go...page 56.



HAWAII If only we could make it so that when you turned to this article, the theme music from "Hawaii Five-O" started playing. It's 1978 and a youngster named Freddy, his older brother and two hot babes are sailing around the Hawaiian Islands. They discover the Hula Land's hypnotic diving, its forbidden places and the secret to good "Maui wowwie." Cast off your bow line on page 94.



MALPELO & COCOS The Westmorlands ventured into the rough and tumble waters of these overgrown sea-mounts to find hammerheads, Mobula Rays, moray eels and a few new dive sites the rest of the world has yet to see. They also discovered that exploration isn't relegated to those with commercial sponsors. Find a world all your own on page 62.



SOCORROS ISLANDS Three-foot-long Remoras hitch a ride on a Manta Ray with a wingspan greater than Shaquille O'Neal's; cleaning stations attract swarms of hammerheads; Silky Sharks come so close, you can almost see them breathing.... "Am I dreaming, Auntie Em?" No, Dorothy, but you're not on the cattleboat anymore. See page 60.



FRED BAVENDAM is a New Hampshire-based underwater photographer whose stories have appeared in *National Geographic*, *International Wildlife* and *Geo*. And, Fred has a special love for octopi. He says, "They beguile me with their sensitivity and intelligence." In this photo, Fred is deep in conversation with a Pacific Giant Octopus off Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Looks like the octopus is more interested in a bear hug.



CONTRIBUTORS

MANDY BOLEN likes to travel light, and as a freelance diving journalist, she has no problem with excess baggage fees. She shows up with the necessary dive equipment, a notebook and a pen (usually "lifted" from a hotel), while her photographer struggles with numerous cases and a rinse bucket. But Mandy's mocking laughter is always quickly silenced as a piece of heavy equipment is heaped upon her, the self-proclaimed "unencumbered writer."



CLARA TAYLOR's freelance work for the *Key West Citizen*, where she photographs the home of the week for the Saturday edition, keeps her diving in the capital of Florida. For three months, Clara (with Mandy Bolen) photographed student instructors for "The Glamorous Life" (an exposition of the certification of a dive instructor) for *Skin Diver*. Her photography has been used in many publications, including *National Geographic*, *GQ* and *USA Today*.



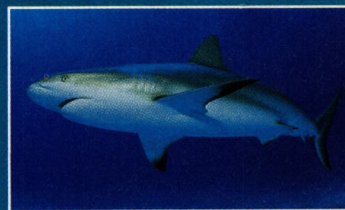
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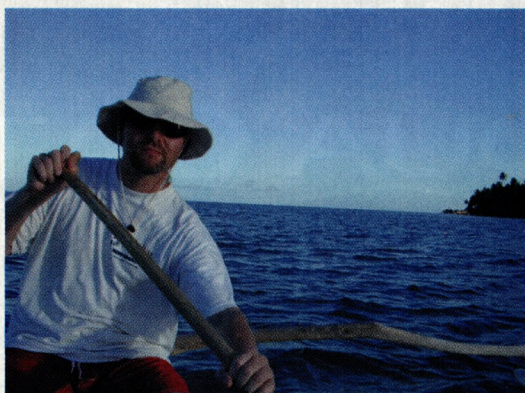
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TAKE OUT YOUR C-CARD. HAVE A GOOD LONG LOOK AT IT. THAT CARD GIVES YOU EXCLUSIVE ACCESS TO a place that more than 90 percent of your neighbors will never experience. It has been said before that we know more about the moon and space than we do about the wonders, workings and inhabitants of the ocean. The ocean is the only place on earth where an ordinary citizen, without years of specialized training and education, can discover and see things others have never before experienced.

And discoveries are made all the time. Last month we chronicled the discovery of both a World War II ship and warplane off Palau. I just read about an entire city, Herakleion, that was sunk during an earthquake nearly 2,000 years ago and recently rediscovered in just 30 feet of water off Egypt. Almost every day, marine biologists and divers see and report marine creatures unknown to science. And there's the legendary *Architeuthis* (or Giant Squid). No one has ever seen one alive, but the deep ocean must teem with them because they help sustain the bulk of Sperm Whales. This month we even sent Stuart and Michele Westmorland off to find the mythical Rivadeneyra Seamount. Fishermen have, for years, told tales of the seamount, where waters, they say, boil with sharks, rays and massive schools of fish. Problem is, most fish-



Explorers Club

ermen in that part of the world don't carry a GPS. If they do, they're not telling.

But you don't have to chase after some elusive dockyard, X-marks-the-spot gossip to truly explore another world. It happens every time you enter the water. It's why first-time contributor, Fred

Bavendam, did back-to-back trips in the Galapagos, and why Field Editor Marty Snyderman is rarely dry, especially on assignment in the Socorro. (This month we've also tapped into his comprehensive knowledge of the seven seas for our World Dive Atlas.) Each of them has found a way to feed their need to discover new worlds, to experience the pulse of the earth and the very soul of adventure. They, like you, are explorers. And, like you, it all began with a C-card and exclusive membership in Earth's last true explorers club. 🐟

TY SAWYER, EDITOR

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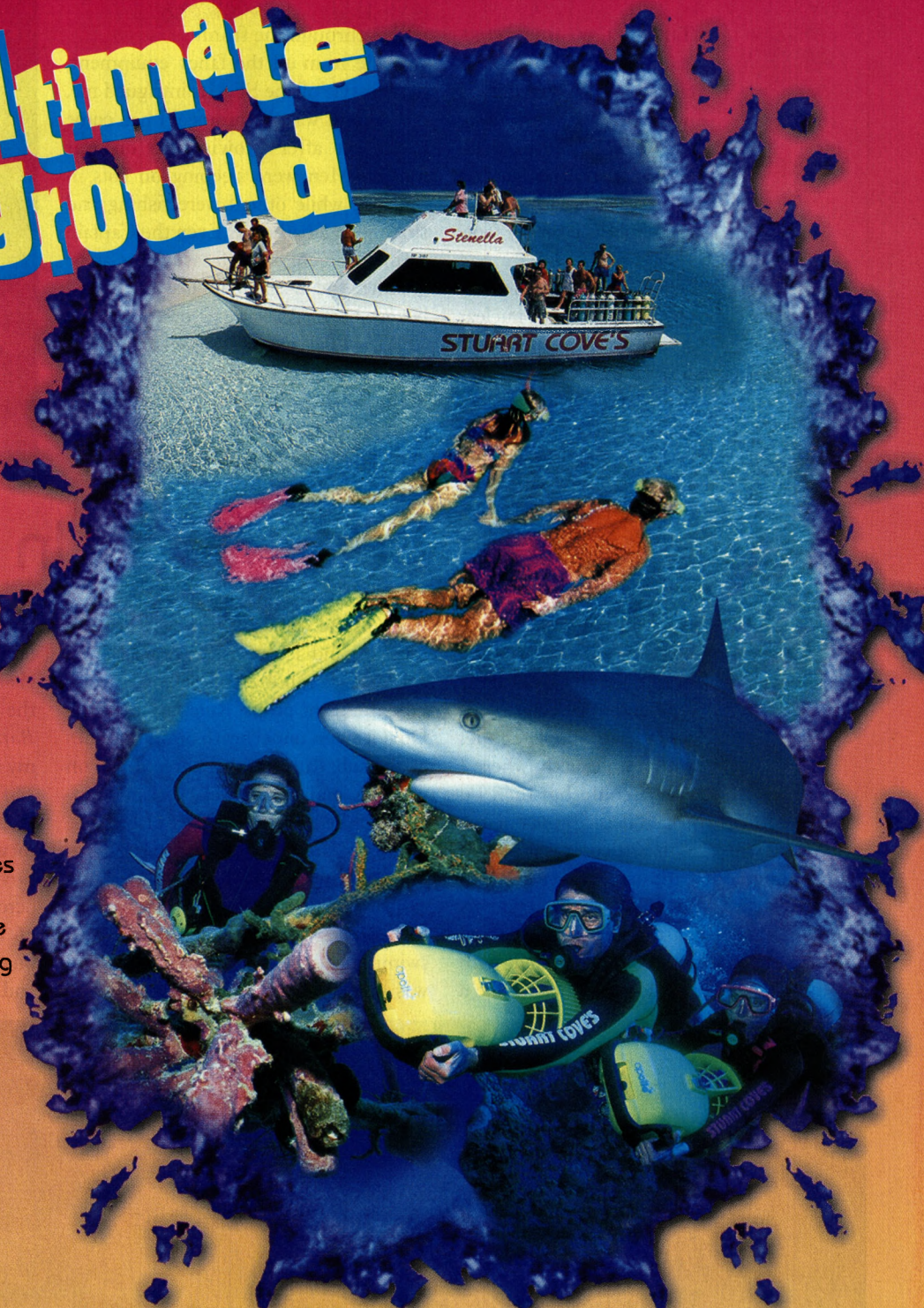
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EDITED BY TIFFANY H. CAREY

THE CALL TO ADVENTURE came at a most inauspicious time. I was draped over the top of my doctor's couch, butt-naked, getting a booster shot. I was recovering from a bad staff infection on my foot.

My SEAL buddy had called to offer me the chance to dive on a nuclear sub and photograph Navy SEALs practicing lockout maneuvers. The purpose of this exercise is to deliver SEALs and gear (such as inflatables) from a sub to the surface. This type of mission is usually done in darkness.

My trip would be a brief one and a half days, but the reprieve from the needle would be welcome.

Due to top secret Navy mumbo-jumbo, I can't let you in on exactly where I was (I could but then I'd have to kill you), so descriptions of the vessel will have to suffice. It was a giant landing craft with its bow—or *was that the stern?*—opened up to take us aboard. One of the SEALs explained how two large inflatables filled with men and gear could be launched like a

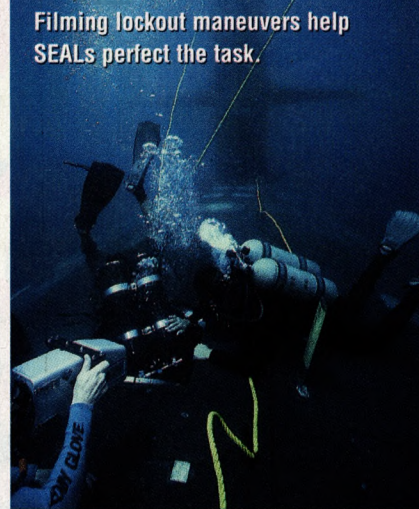
rocket through the front.

Aside from all the fancy equipment, the lifestyle of the SEALs intrigued me, too. Absent was the protocol I had come to expect after growing up on war movies. Men were sleeping on cots in the sun, while others were fishing and stoking up a barbecue. Even the Captain seemed the epitome of casualness as he scanned the horizon in his jacket and boxer shorts. As it turns out, since the SEALs take on the most dangerous operations, they are given a good degree of informality during their time between training. This is the way to live before risking life and limb for your country!

Somewhere In the Pacific...

The time came for our first dive on the sub, and I was made aware of the rules. Rule number one: Never swim near the giant props. Rule number two: Do not swim underneath or on the sides of the sub. Rule number three: I was on my own, and if lost, well, I wasn't supposed to be there in the first place.

As we launched off the boat hero-style, in the inflatable, I felt the same exhilaration as when preparing to dive with whales. I hit the water and started swimming down to the sub like there was no tomorrow. The sub had its



Filming lockout maneuvers help SEALs perfect the task.

antenna out of the water, but it was still 50 feet down to the deck. Although the visibility was 100 feet, only a portion of the hull could be viewed. The theme to *Battlestar Galactica* started playing in my head. OK, it was time to get to work.

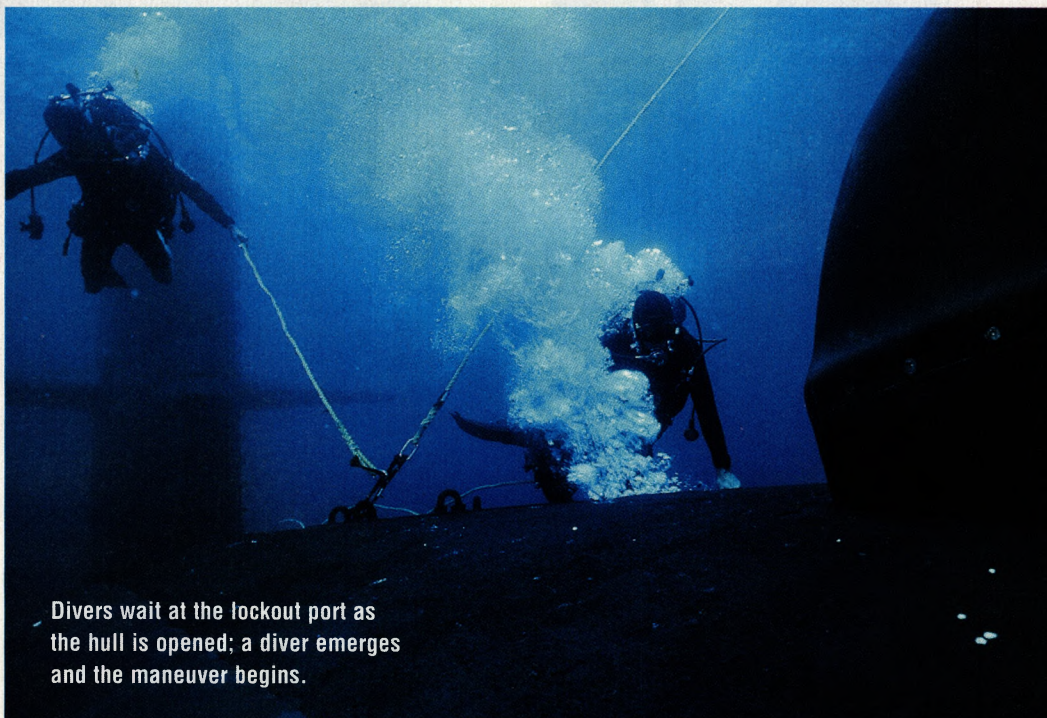
The giant conning tower was rigged at the top with cables stretching forward to a lockout port on the deck. Divers were gathered at the port, octopus regs in hand for the emergence of the SEALs. Soon, a large blast of bubbles signaled the breach in the hull, and a diver emerged without scuba

gear. I was expecting some fancy fin work but instead, I snapped pictures as the SEALs performed basic octopus-assisted ascents. Couldn't they just do a free ascent?

But the object is not only for the SEALs to reach the surface, but also boats and engines. So the SEALs would use lift bags to bring equipment to the surface.

The dives ended as quickly as they began, but I was relieved to rest my sore foot. And diving with the SEALs was a lot more fun than being butt-naked getting booster shots. 🐙

—Niki Konstantinou



Divers wait at the lockout port as the hull is opened; a diver emerges and the maneuver begins.

"WDHOF Members in the Navy"

IN 1974, WHEN DONNA TOBIAS APPLIED FOR NAVY DIVING school, she was bluntly told, "Women don't do this." Refusing to acquiesce, Donna's persistence earned her a place in the Navy Deep Sea (Hard Hat) Diving School. Throughout her training, Donna had to handle some 200 pounds of gear, including the Mark V metal diving helmet, weighted boots and a heavy canvas suit. She dived in pitch-black, icy, often turbulent water, surrounded by larger males, many of whom resented a woman invading their exclusive citadel. "If you ever uttered the words, 'I quit,' you could never take them back, and there were plenty of eyes waiting to see me fail," Donna recalls. "But that just fed my intention to finish the course. I didn't want them asking less of women—ever—for anything." In 1975, she became the first woman to finish the Navy Deep Diving School.

Women have faced remarkable challenges with courage and excellence in a field, which, up until recently, did not allow women into its upper ranks. The Women Divers Hall of Fame currently

has seven Navy professionals; all women who broke through the Navy's all-male barrier. They are: Mary J. Bonnin, Captain Karin Lynn, Commander Bobbie Scholley, Captain Marie E. Knafelc, M.D., Ph.D., Commander Karen Kohanowich and Dr. Susan Kayar.

As evidenced by the elite careers of these women, the Navy has become one of the most egalitarian and gender-blind of all employers. Captain Lynn confirms, "It's not who you are, but how you perform that counts."

—Hillary Viders, Ph.D.

For more on the WDHOF, visit www.WDHOF.org.



Donna Tobias in action, 1973.

BONNE TERRE MINE

FLOODED WITH PRAISE

The world's largest subterranean lake has people talking.



BONNE TERRE MINE, THE WORLD'S largest inland scuba diving facility, is in the national spotlight once again. The mine, which is also the world's largest man-made underground cavern, is one of only four inland diving sites highlighted in Periscope's recreation feature in the July 2, 2001, edition of *Newsweek*.

This is one of several recognitions Diving Bonne Terre Mine has received

in the past few years. Last year, the site was featured in the top 10 of *National Geographic Adventure*'s "The Adventure 100," a competition that highlighted the favorite adventures of the country's foremost outdoors writers and experts. Diving Bonne Terre Mine also has been featured on The Family Channel, "Good Morning America" and the Discovery Channel.

Located 150 feet beneath the town of Bonne Terre, MO, the five-level, 80-square-mile mine welcomes approximately 15,000 divers annually. More than 24 different scuba diving tours are conducted in the crystal clear water with 100-plus-foot visibility. Diving is available year-round.

Bonne Terre was the world's largest producer of lead until the supply diminished in 1961. The mine was closed, so the pumps that removed the water were turned off and the cavernous underground rooms were forgotten.

Twenty years later, Doug and Cathy Goergens, owners of the West End Diving Center in St. Louis, MO, rediscovered the

mine, three levels of which are filled with pure spring water, making it the world's largest subterranean lake. The Goergens turned the mine, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, into an unforgettable, one-of-a-kind scuba diving experience.

"It is like diving a ghost town or shipwreck," said Doug Goergens. "It's an amazing glimpse at the past."

For more information, visit www.2dive.com, or call (314) 731-5003.

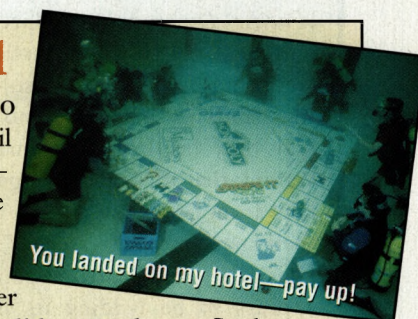
Go to Jail

WHAT CAN YOU DO with a "Get Out of Jail Free" card—underwater? How about raise \$10,000 for charity.

That's what six teams of underwater Monopoly players did recently at Scuba Madness' Fourth Annual U/W Monopoly Fundraiser at the Florence, SC, YMCA. On a 10 by 10-foot board, players battled it out for Park Place and Marvin Gardens for seven hours.

The Hartsville Rescue Squad team won the game and took home 25 percent of the total money raised; the other charities receive 15 percent of the total money raised.

The teams played for the Boys and Girls Club, the Pee Dee Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Assault, the Florence Humane Society, the Hartsville Rescue Squad and other not-profit organizations. Funds also went to the Divers Alert Network (DAN).



A Setting Sun

I was saddened to read of the passing of Kimiuo Asek. I was in the U.S. Navy in Guam in 1973 and was fortunate to make several dives with Kimiuo in the Truk Lagoon. He had just opened his dive shop and Al Giddings was there as well. What great dives we had. Kimiuo will be sorely missed.

—Steve Cooper, Tarzana, CA

Your Passport to New Worlds

A friend of mine received his July 2001 Photo Annual issue of *Skin Diver*. When I looked through it, I was fascinated. The pictures are extraordinary. I am a new diver, so all of the pictures remind me of the sites I have seen, and give me a glimpse into the worlds I haven't yet explored.

—Sandy Fairclough, via e-mail

Return to Grace

I just wanted to drop you a long overdue line to commend you on the vast improvement in your magazine. My friends and I have been diving since 1963, and we started diving and reading *Skin Diver* as a direct result of watching *Sea Hunt*. At the time, we all learned to dive in the tropical waters off New York City, without luxury items such as BCs and pressure gauges. I have to say that for a good many years in the late '80s and early '90s, *Skin Diver* was not even worth reading. But you have definitely turned all of that around.

Your Photo Annuals have been nothing short of spectacular and your regular monthly articles have again turned into news I can use. In closing, I would like to say thanks to all of you at *Skin Diver* for bringing the magazine back to what it was so many years ago. After all, for me, *Skin Diver* is as much a part of diving history as anything else I can bring to mind. Keep up the great work.

—Del Morafchik, via e-mail

TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE**A Shelluva Life**

I truly enjoyed the article "Ancient Mariners—Oahu's Sea Turtles," by David Fleetham in the June issue [*Pacific Diver* insert]. Green Sea Turtles, Hawksbill Turtles and Loggerhead Turtles have suffered at the hands of mankind, and now it may only be through human intervention that these marine species are kept from becoming extinct. Despite their status as a "threatened" species, Hawaii's sea turtle population appears to be holding its numbers and perhaps, even increasing.

Sea turtles can remain submerged for more than two hours. Often they can be found tucked underneath rocky ledges, sleeping during the day. However, a stressed turtle can use up their oxygen rapidly and can drown within three to five minutes.



It is very important that divers utilize good judgement and do not disturb the submerged turtles.

—Gerald Steven Tlapa, Los Angeles, CA

Blinded By the Light

We often find underwater pointing devices using laser light for sale in dive supply catalogues. It is known that if shined into eyes, laser light can destroy the retina. Aquatic animals rely to a large extent on vision to function properly. And the eyes of a wide range of these animals, from conch to fish, focus light on retinas the same way our eyes do. Laser beams being pointed directly into the eyes could result in damage to the retinas and possibly cause animals to suffer from blindness or diminished vision.

It is important that divers keep this in mind.

—Wolf Krebs, via e-mail

Someone Gives a Dam

Kudos to you on your report on the Narmada River dam project in India ("Environment," April 2001). As an environmental anthropology student at the University of Michigan, I have been following this story for several years. Your article on it was the first non-academic piece that I have seen. Thank you for your progressive, socially and environmentally responsible journalism. I hope to see more articles of this type in the future and that other magazines follow in your footsteps.

—Becca Meuninck, Edwardsburg, MI



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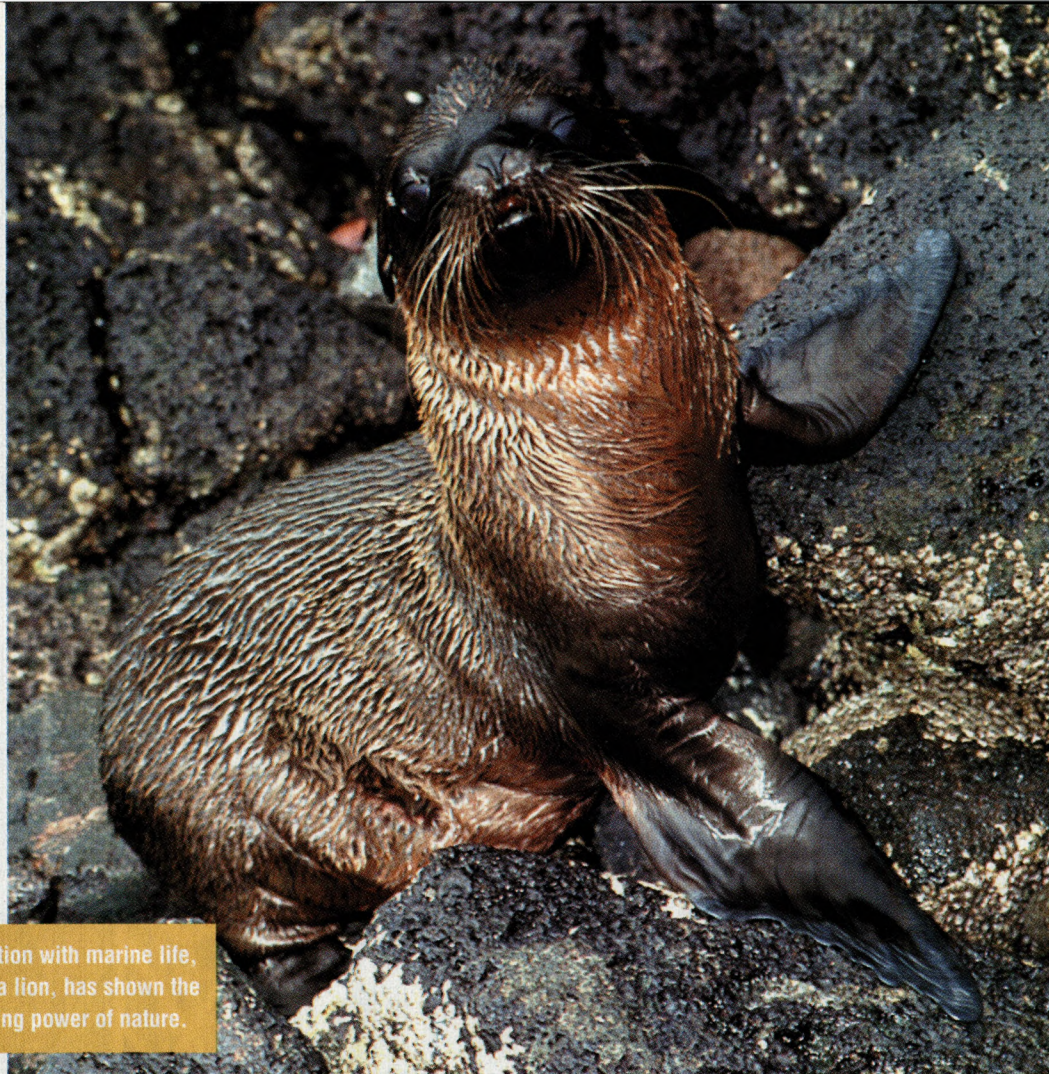
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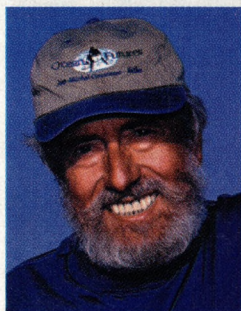
BY JEAN-MICHEL COUSTEAU

Human interaction with marine life, such as this sea lion, has shown the possible healing power of nature.



Nature is Good for Your Health

...what makes us well: the positive feedback loops between nature and humans.



Photo/Lionel Pozzoli

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I HAD THE IMMENSE good fortune to lead a group of handicapped divers on a reef dive in Fiji. I was amazed not only by their grace underwater—a place where they could be completely free—but at the effect of diving on their spirits and self-esteem. It appeared to me that this immersion in the nonhuman world renewed them and rekindled the magic of being alive. Now it appears that such excursions may also have direct health benefits.

Writing in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* (v. 20:3), Professor Howard Frumkin of Emory University has shown that nature can be good for you. Very good, in fact. In his article, “Beyond Toxicity,” Frumkin reviews recent advances in the field of environmental health from around the world. In Australia, he found that heart patients with pets had lower cholesterol and triglycerides than those without. In the U.S., he discovered that prison inmates

seemed to become less violent when they were allowed to work in a garden. One study found that dental patients who were permitted to look at images of landscapes had lower blood pressure than those obliged to look at a blank wall. Another revealed that hospital patients recovered faster, with fewer pain medications, if their room looked out on trees. To Frumkin, these and other results confirm the obvious: nature heals.

The esteemed Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson has commented favorably on Frumkin’s ideas. Wilson is the originator of the hypothesis known as *biophilia*, the innate drive of people to affiliate with nature. For Wilson, the reason for this attraction lies in our genes. For almost the entirety of our three and a half million-year history, our selection of habitat was driven by our biology. A few thousand years ago—literally a blink in evolutionary time—we began to shape our own environment, determine our own surround-

Photo/Tom Ordway

ings. We know it as "civilization" and appreciate its many achievements.

But it brought with it a tragic distancing from nature. This process has culminated in our own highly technological age, when we inhabit largely artificial environments and spend hours of each day in a "virtual" realm of pure abstraction, while the natural environment "out there" loses dozens of species every day.

It doesn't help that we think we can function outside our own biology. We seem to think we are completely in control of the processes that support life on the planet. It's a dangerous fallacy.

Commenting on Frumkin's article, Wilson warns that "...innate algorithms...can be blocked or reversed only at the peril of mental health." For as Frumkin observes, habitat selection and other biologically-driven behaviors that put us in contact with nature confer tangible "survival advantages" upon us.

Is this news? Not entirely. From St. Francis to John Muir and beyond, there have been philosophers of the Earth who have preached the virtues of contact with nature. We acknowledge the fact ourselves, maintaining indoor aquariums and houseplants to increase our feeling of well-being, not to mention sharing our space with pets. In

genetic variety and vigor needed to maintain themselves.

I think these places seduce us into a dangerous complacency. We feel better about the loss of wild habitats as long as we know that somewhere a few acres have been put aside for selected species. In this way, we ease our conscience without really learning how to live sustainably.

And that's the big challenge. Not to remove ourselves from nature, but, as Frumkin's article reminds us, to put ourselves back "into" it in a way that is beneficial to both.

How can we do this? Frumkin has lots of ideas. Some new fields like "ecotherapy" are already tapping into the healing power of nature.

But that is only the beginning. Frumkin suggests a new direction in environmental medicine. Today, epidemiologists try to identify cancers and birth defects from exposure to radiation or dioxin. Like the mitigation of oil spills or nuclear releases, that sector of environmental health seeks to reconstruct a destructive causal cascade. Frumkin calls for a new approach to supplement crisis management. His vision amounts to a positive, proactive blueprint for a new way of living.

He says that researchers should look

In Australia, [Professor Frumkin] found that heart patients with pets had lower cholesterol and triglycerides than those without.

some places, like Japan, where space is at a premium, people "rent" pets for brief periods, just to have some contact with the nonhuman world. Yet even though we accept the value of nature in our private sphere, we continue to isolate ourselves from it, physically and psychologically.

Nature preserves and national parks, for example, can be immensely restorative and valuable. But reports from around the world tell of declining species diversity within these fenced enclosures. Without replenishment from the outside communities, enclosed populations come to lack the

into the environmental causes of not only what makes us sick, but what makes us well: the positive feedback loops between nature and humans. Physicians should work with landscape designers, architects, veterinarians, urban planners and software engineers who might be able to apply this new information to how we actually live.

So when we dive, let us take a moment to reflect on the deeper significance of what we are doing. It's fun alright, more fun than just about anything on the planet. But it is also the renewal of the bond between us and the natural world on which we depend. 🐟

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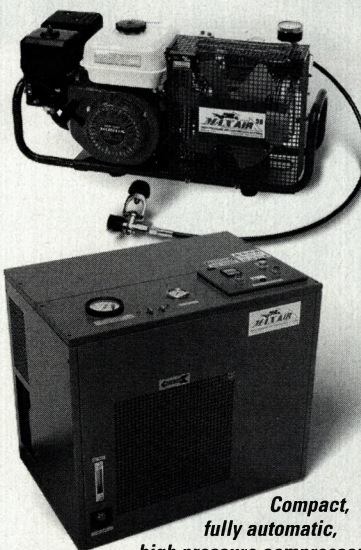
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Ports for SLR Housings: Flat vs. Dome

BY MARTY SNYDERMAN

ASK THE PRO

I am about to buy a housing for my Nikon F100, and I am confused about whether I should buy a flat port or a dome port to go with it. —Patty S., Ft. Lauderdale, FL

A “PORT” IS A PIECE OF GLASS OR plastic that is placed in front of the lens of a housed single lens reflex (SLR) camera. While there are a variety of shapes and sizes, ports are generally divided into two categories: flat ports and dome ports. As a rule, flat ports are used in macro photography, and dome ports are used for wide-angle work. With most housings, the ports are interchangeable. In other words, you can use a flat port with a macro lens on one dive, then quickly change the port to use a dome port with a wide-angle lens on a subsequent dive.

To understand why a flat port is generally preferred for macro work while a dome is used for wide-angle photography, let's take a look at what the different ports do. In either case, a port is an element in the water/glass/air interface, and it functions like the face plate of a mask. Due to the phenomenon of refraction, objects are magnified and appear to be closer and larger than they really are when viewed underwater through the relatively flat faceplate of a dive mask. The same magnification property is an inherent part of the design of a flat port. The magnification factor helps macro photographers fill

a pleasing percentage of their photo-

graphic frame with relatively small subjects. Many small fish and other reef creatures are difficult to get close to, but even when you can't get as close as you want, a flat port helps you fill your frame with your subject instead of with empty space. And many nudibranch and hermit crab-sized subjects that are easy to approach closely might appear to be too small to make a compelling shot, but the magnification factor often enables photographers

...a flat port helps you fill your frame with your subject instead of with empty space.

to overcome that obstacle.

The glass or plastic in a dome port is curved and eliminates, or corrects, the refraction that is inherent in flat ports. The purpose of a dome port is to allow a lens to maintain the same angle of view in the housing that it has in air. A dome port accomplishes this task by keeping all the light rays used to make the image at a



Wide-angle seascapes are best photographed with a large dome port.



The properties of a flat port help make this Longnose Hawkfish fill the frame.



90 degree angle to the film plane. In essence, a dome port allows a wide-angle lens to remain a wide-

20 mm lens behind a dome port, the lens remains a 20 mm lens. The bottom line here is that when you want a

diameter of the dome, the sharper images are likely to be. However, it is important to make sure that a dome port is matched to the wide-angle lens being used, and even when that is the case, you might need to place a diopter in front of the lens so that your image will be in focus. Most housing manufacturers publish a list that suggests various diopter/lens combinations with their dome ports. 🐟

The purpose of a dome port is to allow a lens to maintain the same angle of view in the housing that it has in air.

angle lens. In rough terms, if you were to use a 20 mm lens behind a flat port it essentially becomes a 35 mm lens. If you use the same

lens to document a wide field, you need to use a dome port.

Dome ports are not all the same though. The wider the radius or

Getting Started: So, You Have a Camera. Now What?

IF YOU ARE LIKE A LOT OF NEW UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHERS you feel both a sense of excitement and a bit of intimidation about creating your own underwater images.

You might have been on boats with a number of advanced underwater photographers and seen all their gear and listened to conversations filled with terms such as f/stops, film speed, guide numbers, etc. Being a beginner, you may have not had a clue as to what they were talking about. And there you are with a brand-new point-and-shoot camera in a box. But not to worry. To enjoy your own success, you just need a little guidance.

First, take a few minutes and read the information that came with your camera package. There is much more helpful information in those sheets of paper than you suspect. Second, once you have become familiar with your equipment, consider taking a class. You don't have to take the advanced class, but becoming familiar with photographic fundamentals is a key to long-term success and enjoyment. If you can't find a class in your local area or your schedules don't mesh, consider taking an online course. This course is designed for underwater photographers of all experience levels, no matter what type of camera equipment is owned. And rest assured that any photography course will help you to become familiar with the language of underwater photography, create more compelling images and protect your equipment. After attending a class, you'll gain the confidence and knowledge necessary to make you a successful photographer.



Beginning underwater photographers should follow the old adage: practice makes perfect.

Once you're in the water, try to get close to your subject. If you can be within 3 to 5 feet of your subject with the lenses that come standard with most point-and-

shoot cameras, you have a decent chance of creating a good shot. Generally, the more water you shoot through, the less pleasing your image is likely to be because colors weaken and images lose their crispness.

Also, make sure your subjects fill a pleasing percentage of your picture. Few things are as damaging to an underwater image as a subject that is so small within the frame that the image is difficult to see and becomes uninteresting.

Be aware that many point-and-shoot cameras have acces-

sories that will enable you to take full-frame photographs of relatively small subjects, such as nudibranchs, cowries and hermit crabs. Give these accessories a try if you are especially interested in photographing macro critters.

Photograph your dive buddies doing things that divers enjoy, such as looking at or interacting with marine life, exploring wrecks and taking photographs of their own. The flip side of this suggestion is that you avoid the "Wave at the camera" or "Hi Mom" kinds of shots.

Lastly, photograph people and marine life face first. Viewing audiences want to see the faces and eyes of your subjects, not tails swimming away.

Reading the information that comes with your camera equipment, taking a course and following these tips will help you get started on the right foot and lead you down the path of photographic pleasure and success. 🐟

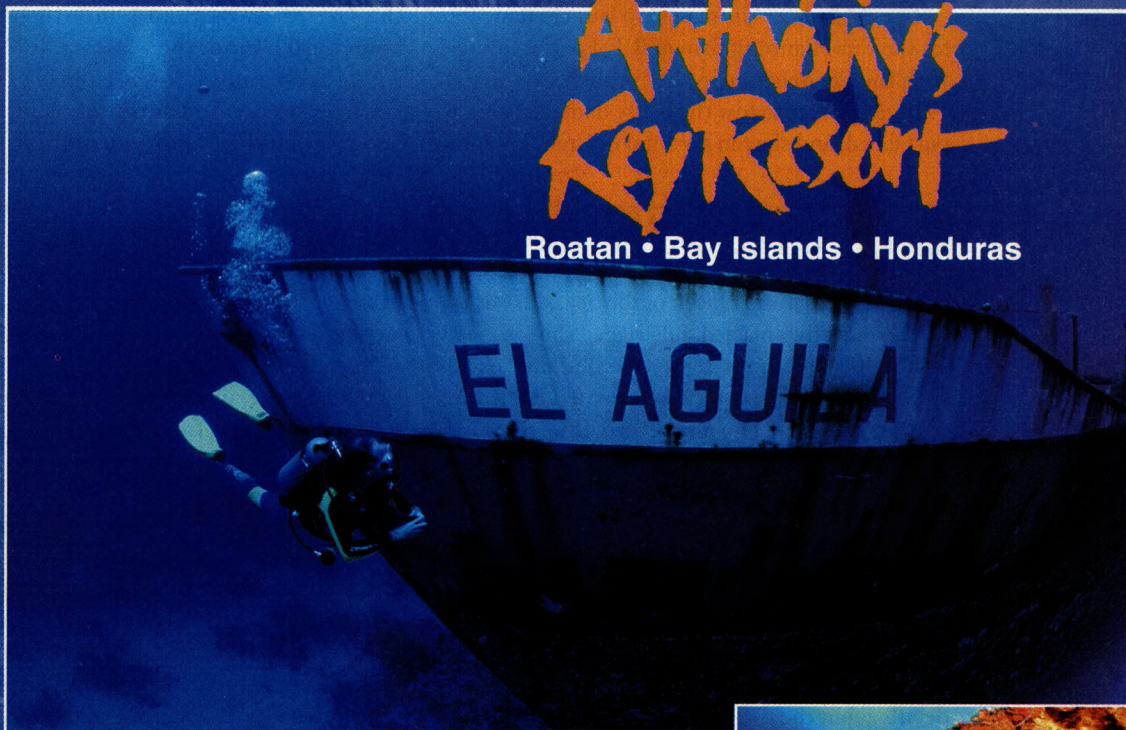
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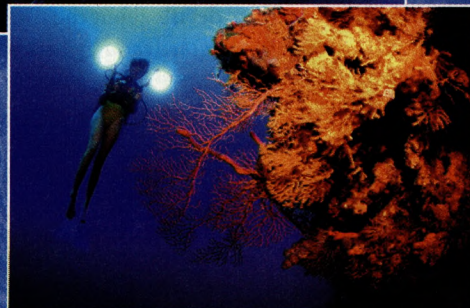

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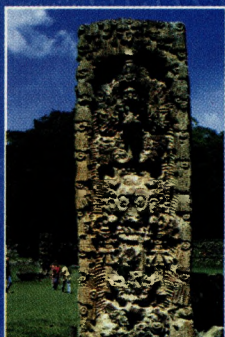
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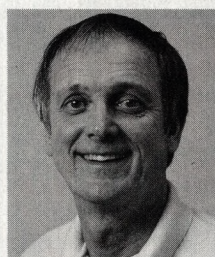


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BY ELLSWORTH BOYD



COLIN DANIELS OF IPWICH, ENGLAND, IS researching shipwrecks in the English Channel and needs information on the *Preussen*, the largest square-rigger ever built.

The *Preussen*, a German ship launched in 1902 for the Fur Hamburg firm of R.F. Laeisz, collided with the SS *Brighton* in the English Channel in 1910. Attempts to tow the badly damaged ship to port failed, and she ran aground in Crab Bay at the

The *Preussen*

foot of the white cliffs of Dover. Nicknamed the Pride of Prussia and Queen of the Sea, she was the world's only five-masted, full-rigged ship.

The 408-foot cargo carrier was designed exclusively for the nitrate trade and carried 8,000 tons of it around Cape Horn in record time. She averaged 11 knots, while setting 43 sails that covered nearly 60,000 square feet. Most of the *Preussen* was salvaged for scrap during World War I, leaving scant remains at the foot of Dover's cliffs. An impressive model built by marine artist Eric Swanson is on display at the San Francisco Maritime Museum, at the west end of Fisherman's Wharf, San Francisco Bay. More details about the five-master can be found in *Ships of the World* by Lincoln Paine.

I HAD JUST FINISHED WATCHING A VIDEO OF *THE Perfect Storm*, when Darlene Cooper of Boise, Idaho, asked about the *Geiser*, sunk off Sable Island, Nova Scotia, in 1888. The video's storyline repeat-

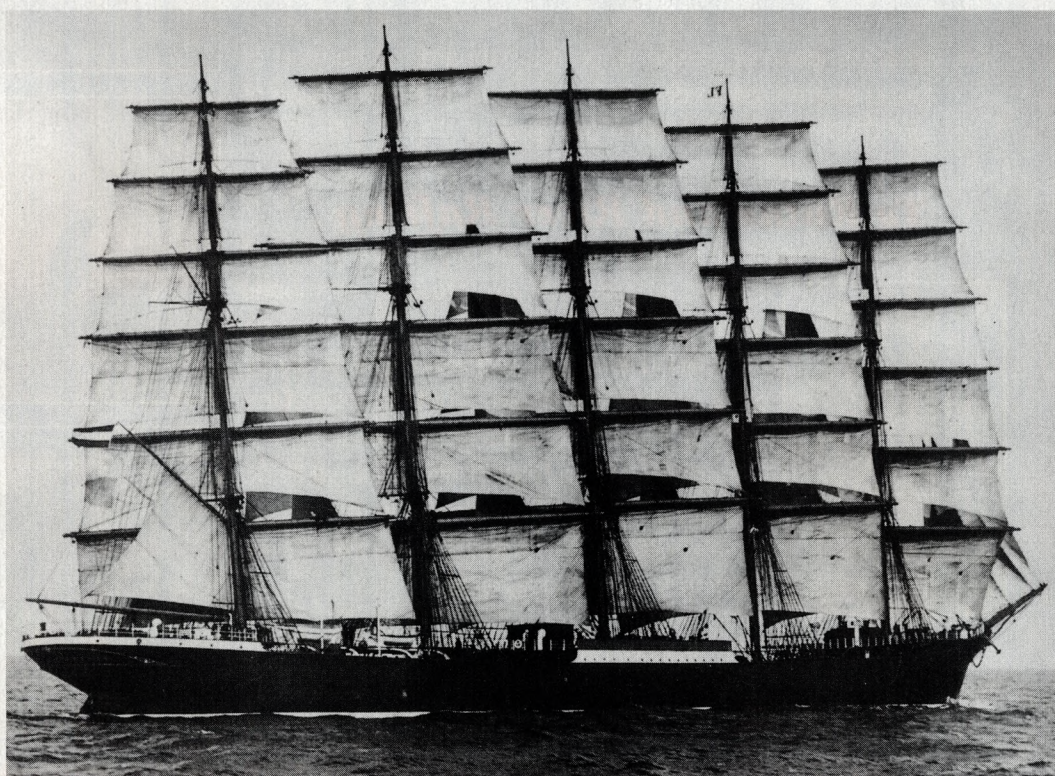
edly referred to the far-flung island where Gloucester fishermen venture in search of swordfish.

In July 1888, Darlene's grandmother emigrated to America from Copenhagen, Denmark, aboard the *Geiser*. Less than a month later, while homeward bound, the vessel collided with the *Thingvalla* and sank with a loss of 105 lives. Darlene has done an outstanding job of tracing her grandmother's ship, including a copy of her emigration register and an informative book—*North Atlantic Seaway*—but she would like to know exactly where the *Geiser* sank.

Checking microfilm from newspapers dating back to 1888 would be one possibility, while contacting someone on Sable Island might be another. Although I have a chart of wrecks off Newfoundland, I have nothing on Nova Scotia. I would be interested in hearing from readers who know something about the waters off Sable Island.

NEIL HORAN OF FERNDale, Washington, asks, "Where off the coast of California is the 'Devil's Jaw' and are treasure ships sunk near it?"

Fifty miles northwest of Santa Barbara lies a rocky Pacific bluff California divers know as Honda Point. Listed on maps as Point Pedernales, it was called La Guijada del Diablo (or the Devil's Jaw) by the Spanish who sailed their treasure galleons between Mexico and the Orient. Mariners later dubbed the area between Point Purisima and Point Conception—including Honda—the Graveyard of the Pacific. This 25-mile stretch, encompassed by fog and battered by wind



The *Preussen* was the world's only five-masted full-rigged ship.

and waves, claimed many ships on its dangerous shoals.

Most notable are nine U.S. Navy destroyers that took a wrong turn in 1923 and rammed into Honda Point. Seven of them remain today, rusting and disintegrating in the Devil's Jaw. The steamer *Edith*, whose passengers carried substantial sums of money to invest in the California Gold Rush, went down in 1848. The *Yankee Blade*, with successful miners and a \$153,000 gold shipment aboard, was gobbled up by the Jaw in 1854.

The purser's vault of the *Santa Rosa* held an undisclosed amount of gold coin when it sank in 1927, none of it ever recovered. The SS *Cuba's* \$400,000 in silver bullion, lost when the mail ship ran aground in 1923, is still down there, too. The list goes on, each account more intriguing than the other, not to mention the galleons and their New World treasures that have never been found.

TOM TAYLOR, LIGHTHOUSE HISTORIAN, Ponce De Leon Inlet, Florida, re-

ports on current plans for surveying and mapping the SS *Commodore*.

The steam-powered tug was transporting arms and ammunition for Cuban freedom fighters, when it sank in a storm off Daytona Beach in 1897. Stephen Crane, author of *The Red*

[The *Preussen*] ran aground in Crab Bay at the foot of the white cliffs of Dover.

Badge of Courage, was aboard the ship when it sank. He and three other passengers endured a hard night at sea in a 10-foot dinghy before it washed ashore. The adventure inspired Crane to pen, *The Open Boat*, hailed by journalist

Ralph Paine as "...one of the finest short stories ever written."

The *Commodore* was discovered in the late 1960s by local diver Don Serbousek, who wasn't sure of its identity until 1986, when researcher Peggy Friedman compared artifacts from the wreck to the original cargo manifest. Engaged in filibustering (support of a revolution in a foreign country), the vessel's name and home port had been shrouded in secrecy. There will be no excavation or salvage of the wreck until a full survey is completed by divers from the Cambrian Foundation and East Carolina University. A major exhibit, accompanied by a video ("Stephen Crane and the *Commodore*") can be seen at the lighthouse. 🐟

If you have any information about the waters off Sable Island or if you have any other wreck inquiries, write to Ellsworth Boyd, 1120 Bernoudy Rd, White Hall, MD, 21161. Be sure to include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for a personal reply. Ellsworth can also be e-mailed at aced@gateway.net.

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BY RYAN ALLEN AND DARYL CARSON

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Sea Vision: (800) 732-6275, www.seavisionusa.com



Harvey's TWREX Titanium Drysuit

The TWREX neoprene drysuit from Harvey's incorporates a solid coating of titanium foil applied directly to both sides of the neoprene sheet, which creates a reflective surface to radiate heat back to the diver. Other features include low-profile, high-performance Apeks valves, heavy-duty zipper (men's suits also come standard with a "relief zipper"), oversized Swiss Kevlar knee pads and heavy duty vulcanized dry boots. Available in 5 and 7 mm versions.

Harvey's: (800) 347-0054, www.harveys-divesuits.com



Nexus F4 Pro Housing

The F4 Pro, shown here with the 70-180 macro zoom port, provides access to all of the Nikon F4's features and controls, including lens operation. The multi-port system is easily reconfigured to fit the 60 mm lens, 105 mm lens and the 180 Sigma macro lens. The Pro also supports wide-angle lenses, from the 16 mm fisheye to the 35 mm medium wide. Dual sync TTL ports, multiple accessory mounts and a host of professional accessories are available for this compact and lightweight system.

Nexus: (858) 455-0873, www.usanexus.com



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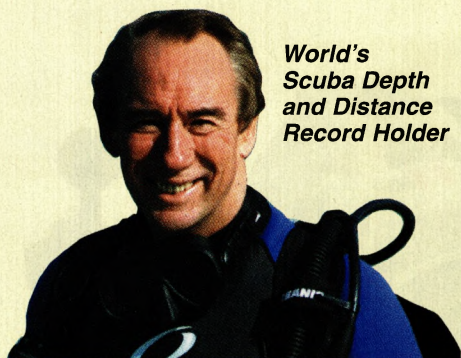
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by Daryl Carson

6 *little* **BIG LIGHTS**



I, LIKE MANY DIVERS, HAVE ALWAYS BEEN CURSED WITH THE NEED TO GET *THE BEST*. OR, AT LEAST AS CLOSE TO *THE BEST* AS my budget would allow. When it came time to buy a dive light, *the best* translated into *the biggest*, and I became the proud owner of a light the size of a cinder block. Only, a cinder block wouldn't have weighed quite so much.

But those were the dark ages, and here in the enlightened future (forgive the pun), divers have access to torches that are smaller, lighter and brighter than ever. Sure, *the biggest and best* crowd can now pay big pesos for video-quality HID rigs with rechargeable battery-packs and separate light heads (yes, I have one). But a new breed of hand-helds has also emerged. Engineered for just the right balance between compactness and power, most are fueled by easy-to-find C-cell alkaline batteries or small rechargeable units. They travel well, pack light and are nearly effortless to wield underwater. And each will punch a big, gaping hole in the dark.



Photo/Daryl Carson



Underwater Kinetics Sunlight C8

The alpha male in the UK's Sunlight C series is the C8. Powered by either eight C-cell alkaline batteries or a rechargeable battery pack (Nicad or alkalines), it pumps out 13.2 watts with a Xenon-filled bulb. Actually, there are two bulbs; two lamps, placed side by side, can be used alternately. Turn the rotating switch to the left and one bulb slides into the center of the reflector and lights up. Turn it



Princeton Tec 600

The beauty of the Tec 600 is in its straight-forward design: Batteries in a tube with a bulb on one end. And, for a relatively small, sleek light, it produces a hefty beam, thanks in part to a halogen lamp. Powered by six C-cells, it is the optimal do-it-all size: small enough to stay in a BC pocket for day dives, big enough to pull primary light duty at night. Rated to 1,000 feet, there should be no qualms about taking this work-horse deep. And, there are a couple of nice accessories available, namely a wide-beam reflector and a red lens filter (for sneaking up on lobsters at night). The no-fuss toggle switch is streamlined to reduce snags. **Princeton Tectonics: (609) 298-6871; www.princetonotec.com**



back to the right, and the other takes its place. The bulbs provide up to 60 hours of burn time, and a back-up that's literally at the diver's fingertips. Another notable is the unique locking mechanism that slides in and out of the bottom of the switch. Pull it out (to unlock) before the dive, and it almost doubles the size of the switch face, making it easier to manipulate. The C8 is built from ABS and polycarbonate plastic and is protected by a bezel cover. **Underwater Kinetics: (858) 513-9100; www.uwkinetics.com**



Pelican Nemo 8C

The secret to the Nemo's slim size is that it packs eight C-cells in a space normally reserved for just six, thanks to an ultra-compact battery pod. It all fits into a polymer housing rated to 500 feet. The light's structural integrity is maintained by using a clever magnetic switch that doesn't require any extra holes in the body. The only opening is the one covered by the screw down lens cover. Keep the O-ring in good shape, and this light should never flood.

The Nemo uses a Xenon gas lamp and puts out 13.8 watts of light directed by a parabolic focused reflector. The magnetic switch is removable, so that any excess material picked up from the sand can be periodically cleaned away. A locking mechanism keeps the light from accidentally turning on when jostled around in a dive bag. And, all of this functionality is wrapped in a well-styled package. Thermoplastic over-molding on the grip and shroud enhances the Nemo's aesthetics while making it easier to handle with bare hands. **Pelican Products: (310) 326-4700; www.pelican.com**



Princeton Tec Shockwave II

The "II" in Shockwave II obviously denotes that this is the newest incarnation of the Shockwave series. But it could also stand for the light's new technology—a dual filament bulb. The bulb uses two independent filaments. One burns at six watts, and its neighbor heats up to 13. A special switch allows the diver to select either power setting.

The payoff to this setup is also two-fold. First is the benefit of having a built-in backup. If one filament burns out, simply switch over to the other and continue your dive. The other is being able to select the most appropriate setting for

a given dive. If you're on a night dive and don't want to blind the entire reef, the six-watt filament will give you a more subtle presence while nearly doubling battery life from five to 10 hours.

The Shockwave II is powered by eight C-cells, comes with a spare bulb and is designed with an easy-to-manipulate switch lock. It's depth-rated to 1,000 feet. **Princeton Tectonics: (609) 298-6871; www.princetonotec.com**



Underwater Kinetics Light Cannon 100

UK's Light Cannon 100 is bringing HID power to the little people. High Intensity Discharge (HID) technology is no longer relegated to the realm of video production and cave diving. The Light Cannon 100 uses eight C-cells to power a glowing ball of ionized gas. The light produced is whiter (closer to the color temperature of the sun), so it penetrates farther into the water column. The 10-watt HID metal halide bulb produces light equivalent to that of a standard 25-watt lamp. The HID bulb will last as long as 1,000 hours, and burn time is between three and four hours on a set of batteries.

Also suitable for video production, the Light Cannon can be fitted with a wide-angle filter to increase light coverage. Built-in safety features include a thermostat controlled shutdown mechanism to avoid over-heating, a polarized battery chamber and isolated electronics.

Both a pistol grip and lantern handle are available. The handles slide into a groove on the case (made from durable ABS, TPE and polycarbonate plastic) and are held in place by a set screw. This makes the chosen handle easily removable for using the light in other applications, like video. A locking device on the On/Off switch must be pulled down before the light can be turned on and prevents accidental discharge of the batteries when the light is not in use. When first turned on, the light will take 20 seconds before reaching full brightness, and must be turned off for at least three seconds before it can be activated again. **Underwater Kinetics: (858) 513-9100; www.uwkinetics.com**



Tektite Trek 6000

A lean, mean, bright shining machine, the Tektite Trek 6000 is a no-frills six C-cell light rated to withstand depths to 300 feet. The pistol grip handle can be slid on and off at will and is held in place by a simple (but strong) tension clip. It's easy to remove, which is a great feature for packing this light away in a bootie or wetsuit sleeve for extra protection during travel. Sans handle, this light is also compact enough to stow in a BC pocket.

The Xenon bulb is good for 25 hours of use, and a spare is included with the light. And, at 7.65 watts, the Trek 6000 is plenty bright enough for use as a primary night diving light or to investigate the dark

crevices of wrecks and reefs during the day. An especially well-designed jeweled reflector helps direct each of those watts in a wide, uniform beam. An optional spot reflector can also be installed for those that prefer greater focus.

To ensure water tightness, the Trek 6000 is protected by double O-ring seals, even around the switch. And, if the switch should fail, the backup twist-on feature allows divers to use the light simply by tightening down the lens cover. **Tektite: (800) 540-2814; www.tek-tite.com**

**little
BIG LIGHTS**

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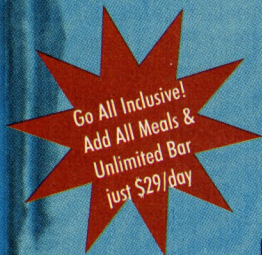
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DIVER'S LIBRARY

BY KYLE FOSTER

Welcome to the Diver's Library, where each month we bring you the latest in diving media.

STEVE ROSENBERG'S DISCLAIMER in the introduction of *Diving & Snorkeling Monterey Peninsula & Northern California* pretty much sums it up: "Diving in Monterey Bay and Northern California isn't for everyone." I'm not normally itching to get into those frigid waters, but after hearing it described so passionately by someone who has dived the area for more than 30 years, I might be willing to give it a try. According to Rosenberg,

Diving & Snorkeling Monterey Peninsula & Northern California

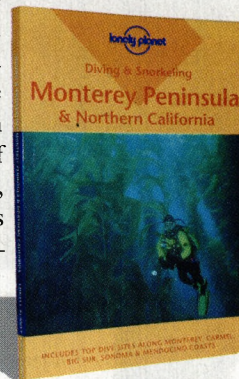
by Steve Rosenberg
Lonely Planet
Publications, \$16.99,
(800) 275-8555,
www.lonelyplanet.com

"Diving on days when the visibility is over 50 feet and the sun bursts through the cloak of fog or clouds is like floating through a

giant Redwood forest—an awesome and addictive experience."

Well, OK! This wonderfully colorful narration is complimented by detailed maps of both streets and dive site locations, so navigating topside and below is a breeze. There are also in-depth descriptions of 46 dive sites, beautiful pictures and lots of helpful tips (such as

to bring plenty of quarters for parking) to make the unacquainted diver feel right at home. It all adds up to an essential guide to diving Central and Northern California. 🐟



For information on how to submit a product for review in Diver's Library, contact Kyle Foster at fosterk@emapusa.com.

By Michelle Danner

SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION



Cayman Islands

Three Different Dive Vacations in One

A Diver's Journal

Every diver has heard about the Cayman Islands. These Caribbean islands are known for their numerous dive sites that offer 80-degree water, 100-foot visibility and a spectacular underwater world. All three islands, Grand Cayman, Cayman Brac, and Little Cayman have many similarities: great service, top-notch hotels, professional dive operators, and a safe environment—day and night. However, each island is unique, offering a different dive vacation experience that caters to all kinds of divers, from beginners to experts.

Grand Cayman's diverse diving is matched by its topside activities, which has something for everybody. It has an abundance of dive shops and resorts that would satisfy any diver and it also boasts a city-life atmosphere to please all travelers: shopping, snorkelling, windsurfing, jetskiing, fine dining, nightlife, museums, golfing, and just plain relaxing. The Sister Islands, Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, also offer the same top-notch diving and service, and are easily accessible from Grand Cayman. Cayman Brac has a population of just over 1,000 with all of the amenities one would expect on a resort island, but with a small-town feel. Little Cayman, on the other hand, is 10 miles long and one mile wide, has over 100 residents, and is a perfect hideaway for divers who want pure relaxation and little interruption.



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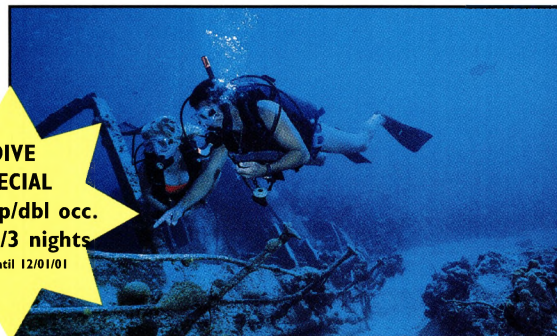
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CIRCLE # 53 ON READERS SERVICE CARD



Recently, my dive buddy, an expert diver, and I, a beginner, jumped on a plane to discover the Cayman Islands firsthand. We found that each island has its own charming qualities, and one thing remained the same: the diving was unbelievable. Join us on our seven-day journey through the Cayman Islands and find out why all three islands are a dive destination like no other.

Day 1 Grand Cayman — We Dive Right In!

On our first morning we dove Sand Chute and Aquarium, both located on the West Side. Sand Chute is famous for its 60-foot sandy "ski" slope, a great starting point for a spectacular dive where we encountered Southern Stingrays feeding on Conch shells, and schools of Horse-eye Jacks. At Aquarium we found large, healthy strands of day-feeding Pillar Coral, along with Yellowtail Snappers.

After our morning dive, we headed to Seven Mile Beach. It's a great place to relax and enjoy the white-sand beaches and aqua-blue water that The Cayman Islands is famous for. Lounge chairs are abundant, and the beachfront offers snorkelling, windsurfing, and jetskiing. Before the sun went down, we did a shore dive off Sunset House Resort in search of the new lady in town, Amphitrite. Amphitrite is an impressive nine-foot, 600-pound bronze mermaid watching over the beautiful sunset reef. She is easy to reach with a dive shop on the premises and resting just 100 yards offshore.

We ended our day on Grand Cayman with dinner at a truly world-class sushi restaurant, Bamboo, located at the Hyatt Regency, telling stories of our first three dives and anticipating our next day.

Day 2: Grand Cayman — Tarpon, Stingrays, & Atlantis Sub, Oh My!

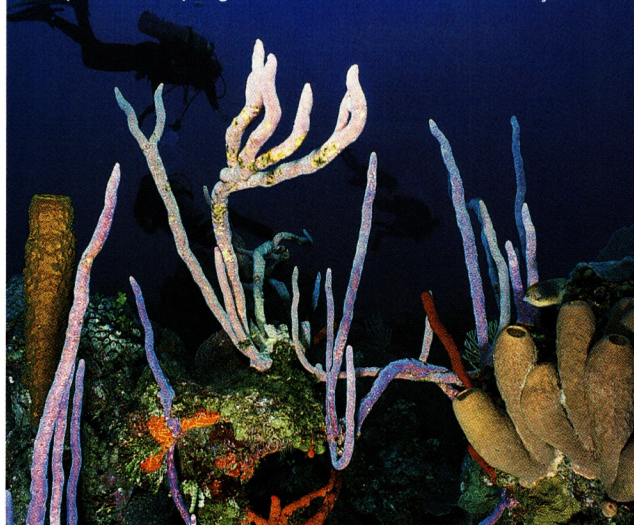
On our second day we dove Tarpon Alley and Martin's Wall. At Tarpon Alley, up to 100 Tarpon can be found resting in the shadows of the sandy alleyways that lead to the drop-off of North Wall. Spotted Eagle Rays are almost as common and will often delight divers throughout a dive. Martin's Wall, located on Grand Cayman's East End, was adorned with purple seafans and forests of feathery gorgonians, which provide hideouts and shelter for colorful tropicals and large trumpetfish. And, of course, the ever present turtles.

After a quick lunch, we headed to Stingray City. Our dive operator, Sunset Divers, offered a service for both divers and snorkellers. An easy dive at 15 feet, we were able to get a close look at these beautiful creatures as they danced around us, sometimes 20 at a time. You could actually

Courtney Platt gives a briefing before the 1000 foot descent.



Spectacular sponge life off North Wall on Grand Cayman.



touch them as they swept by, feeling their skin and their strength at each passing.

Since 15 feet wasn't deep enough for my dive buddy, we headed to the Atlantis Dive Center for its 1,000-foot submarine adventure, the only one like it in the world. It was truly amazing! If that's going a little too deep, other sub adventures are offered in George Town, Cayman's capital. And don't forget to check out the new Duty Free Mall while you're there. It offers an abundance of shopping, and also houses the new 12,000-gallon aquarium.

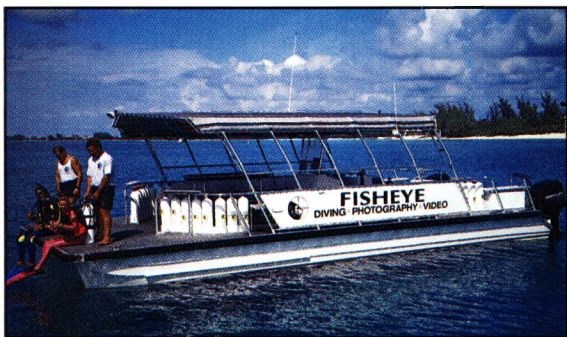
For nightlife, we opted for something different: Bed Restaurant and Lounge. With numerous food options and a cool, hip ambience, Bed is just one more example of Grand Cayman's diverse dining choices.

Day 3: Grand Cayman — It Just Gets Better

It was our last day on Grand Cayman, and the diving just got better. We headed to North Wall and Pinnacles with Dive Tech, a dive shop conveniently located on the premises of our resort: Cobalt Coast Resort located on the North Western tip of the island at Boatswain Bay. At North Wall, the odd Hammerhead shark may sometimes come in for a curious look and we were fortunate enough to be visited by one. Pinnacles is a shallow coral reef that hosts everything from small groups of Pompano to tiny pipefish. Barracuda will also often await your return to the boat in a silent vigil beneath the keel.

On the way to our next adventure, we stopped off at another one of Grand Cayman's fantastic beaches: Rum Point. After a quick dip in the soothing ocean, we hopped onboard the Rum Point Ferry and headed back to the Safehaven Dock. From there, we headed to the Turtle Farm for a guided tour. Home to approximately 16,000 turtles, the farm serves as a breeding ground and has helped preserve the endangered Green Sea Turtle over its 30-year history. A site worth seeing, the Turtle Farm also offers release programs where anyone can release their very own turtle—something adults and kids alike continue to enjoy.

To cap off the day, we relaxed with a beautiful and delicious twilight dinner at Grand Old House, overlooking the



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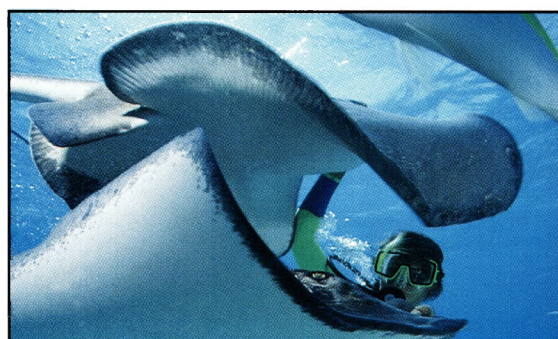
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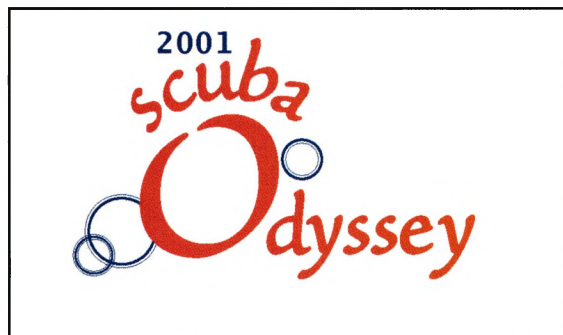
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CIRCLE # 63 ON READERS SERVICE CARD

ocean. This was fine dining with a historical twist: The charming restaurant is built in one of the oldest homes on the island. We ended our three-day journey to Grand Cayman with excitement about the next adventure: Cayman Brac.

Day 4 Cayman Brac — Nature's Paradise

We flew into Cayman Brac (only 45 minutes from Grand Cayman on Island Air), arriving after the morning dive, so we decided to check out the Brac's topside attractions instead. Cayman Brac has plenty. It is one of the rare places where the modern world conveniences and nature come together to create a blissful oasis. You can still keep in touch with the rest of the world, if you want to, but you can also toss the cell phones and Internet for ocean views from Cayman Brac's Bluff, hikes up to the lighthouse, enjoying a swim, riding a bike, bird watching or go cave exploring. There are over 35 nature sites that can be explored.

After a day of adventure where we encountered a Cayman Brac parrot and found some sleeping bats in one of the island's caves, we went for a swim at our hotel, Carib Sands Beach Resort, then headed to the Captain's Table for an excellent dinner. Dive stories were shared with our dinner companions. They dove the Russian warship, M.V. Captain Keith Tibbetts that morning. Attracting eagle rays, stingrays, Jew fish, and more, the ship can be reached from the shore and snorkellers often visit the site, with visibility reaching its 50-foot depth. The 330-foot ship was sunk in September 1996 and has since become a must-do dive while visiting the island.

Day 5 Cayman Brac — Brac Diving-Anchor's Away

Just because we were on a smaller island didn't mean that the service was limited. Reef Divers on Cayman Brac pampered us with their dive site knowledge and excellent service. Anchor Wall, the first dive of the day, is a long, luxurious swim-through that starts at about 70 feet, leads past an ancient anchor and opens out onto the face of the wall at 110 feet. Here we encountered unusually large Spotted Eagle Rays as they visited a drop-off festooned with seafans and sponges. Charlie's Reef is a shallow site with large schools of striped grunts and cobia. Juvenile drums are common and short swim-throughs and overhangs provide shelter for large snapper and timid Squirrelfish. Small creatures abound, so it was worth our time to settle in one spot to catch all the action.

The divemasters were also kind enough to tell us of another of Cayman Brac's highlights: The Westerly Ponds. A great location for bird photography and a site for nature lovers, Westerly Ponds is on the southwest side of the island and is one of the 35 nature tourism sites. After a leisurely stroll, we headed back for a quick bite at the hotel, then prepared for our flight to Little Cayman.

Day 6 Little Cayman — Iguanas Have the Right of Way

Little Cayman is slightly smaller than the Brac. You can tell how much smaller just by its airport, which shares space with the post office and fire department! The landing strip consists of a grassy airstrip surrounded by lush terrain. We were picked up by the hotel van, and whisked off to the luxurious Conch Club Condominiums. We chose to grab one of the many unlocked bikes to take a tour of the island. Now on an island that has fewer cars than iguanas, we understood the draw to this small island, that is just a 30-minute plane ride from Grand Cayman and eight minutes from Cayman Brac on Island Air.

CAYMAN ISLANDS
Grand Cayman • Cayman Brac • Little Cayman



Getting ready to take off from Little Cayman's grassy airstrip.

On our bike ride we found Point o' Sand Beach. Geared with snorkelling equipment, we spent the afternoon leisurely enjoying the crystal-blue waters and white sand, our only encounter with a stranger came from a local hermit crab. Biking back to the hotel, we stopped at the island's historical museum that offers plenty of history on Little Cayman's evolution since Columbus discovered the islands 500 years ago. Although kayaking, sailing, fishing and other activities are offered on the island, the choice was made to have a nice massage then head over to the Hungry Iguana restaurant for dinner. This is the beauty of Little Cayman: You can be on a secluded island and still have a wonderfully prepared meal with a French cook in the kitchen.

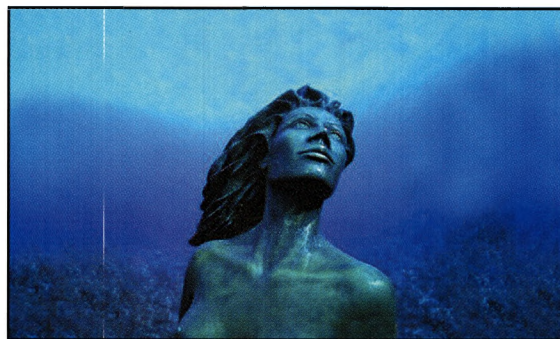
Day 7 Little Cayman — Diving Bloody Bay Wall

Little Cayman's dive operators may live on a relaxed island, but they know how to be professional and the service is exceptional. If we were going to stay longer, we could have just left our dive gear on the boat, ready for the next day's dive. Our first dive of the day was to Eagle Ray Roundup, located on the famous Bloody Bay Wall. Swim throughs were abundant in the reefs, which led to sandy coves filled with underwater life. Here we found purple and white shrimp on corkscrew anemones. At Donna's Delight, the featured attractions were the friendly Nassau Groupers. They relish having their chins and backs scratched, which makes for great photo ops for the slide show back home.

After lunch and a massage at The Nature Spa at Little Cayman Beach Resort, which offers full pampering packages, we took a ride out to see the iguanas at Mahogany Bay. These creatures are so friendly, if they see you coming, they will run out to greet you, but have some bread crumbs ready because they are hungry. A unique feature to the island is also the red-footed boobies that inhabit it, a treat for both birdlovers and travelers alike. There are 20,000 currently living on the island and they are found at Tarpon Lake and Booby Pond, the largest nesting colony in the Western Hemisphere.

Relishing in the tranquility and quiet of the island, we went for an afternoon swim then spent the night staring at the stars in the darkened sky. No phones rang, no horns honked. Shoes were optional. Relaxation was mandatory and we happily obliged.

Leaving the Cayman Islands was not easy. We were able to enjoy three different worlds in just seven days: The quicker pace of Grand Cayman, fun and adventure on Cayman Brac, and pure relaxation on Little Cayman. All three islands offer fantastic diving—for all kinds of divers. But, they also offer a dream vacation for everybody. Whether you want fine dining, exceptional service, top-notch diving, or barefoot beach cruising, the Cayman Islands has it all.



Sunset House

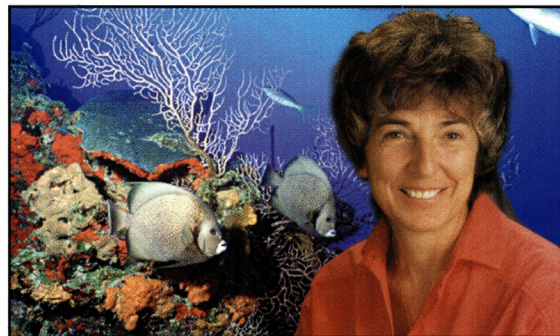
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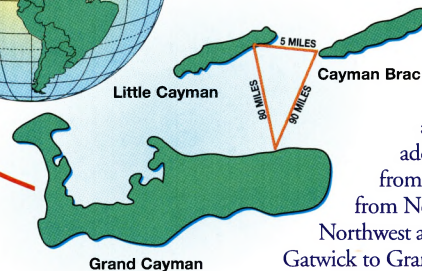
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Getting There/General Info



It's hard to imagine a destination that offers dive travelers more than the Cayman Islands. Underwater there is incredible diversity: colorful walls, shallow coral reefs, new and old wrecks, and friendly, photogenic marine life. Divers enjoy all of this in visibility that averages 75 to 100 feet and water temperatures from 79° to 83°F.

Diving couldn't be easier anywhere. The topside dive services are state of the art and just as diverse as the underwater attractions. There is a dive operation to suit every need, every budget and every wish.

The three islands are very different. Little Cayman and Cayman Brac are sparsely populated and quiet. Grand Cayman offers a little of everything. The capital of George Town has every modern amenity but there are quiet, laidback areas as well.

While great dive destinations often require difficult travel, the Cayman Islands are easily reached—they're just a little more than an hour's jet flight from Miami! In addition to Miami, national flag carrier, Cayman Airways, provides non-stop service from Orlando, Tampa and Houston. There is also non-stop service to Grand Cayman from Newark on Continental Airlines, New York (JFK) and Atlanta on Delta, Detroit on Northwest and Philadelphia and Charlotte on US Air. British Airways offers direct service from Gatwick to Grand Cayman and inter-island travel is provided by Island Air.

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HammerHeads Share Scary Stories of the Deep Blue Sea

IN HONOR OF HALLOWEEN, HammerHeads members described some of the hair-raising experiences they've had while exploring their local waters.

Patti Stewart had a rather creepy dive when a huge barracuda circled above the ascent line on a wreck dive, daring her to rise to the surface. Fortunately, she made it up safely without the creature eating her for lunch. And on another wreck dive, fellow HammerHead Tom Perez came across a beautifully preserved officer's stein, but was surprised to find something a little less appealing—a skull with a hole blown out its left side from what looked like shrapnel.

Some HammerHeads seek out dive spots known for their "spooky" quality. A few of the favorite spine-chilling locations include Spooky Channel in Honduras and Ghost Canyon in the Grand Cayman Islands.

For more information, visit www.h-heads.com, or contact Lydia Eldridge at (858) 616-6408.

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DURING MY TRAINING AS A CAVE DIVER, THE INSTRUCTOR, a fellow student and I were exiting Florida's Devil's Eye cave system. About 1,000 feet back, we headed out, following multiple jumps (switching from one line in the cave to another). We jumped back to the main line, where my teammate in the lead turned left and continued swimming. I found the turn interesting, first because it revealed the fluidity, buoyancy control and poise of a skilled cave diver, but primarily because we were supposed to turn right. Having turned left, she was headed back into the cave. Our instructor hovered nearby behind, watching amusedly to see what would happen.

"Attention!" I signaled, using the accepted sign for "attention," which is to say, I flicked my light back and forth as if it were dumping 12,000 volts into my hand.

"You have my attention," she replied, using the accepted universal look that men everywhere recognize to mean, "Yeah, what?"

"Umm, this," I signed by pointing to a nearby line arrow pointing back to the right. (Line arrows always point the direction out.) Then I suggested that we should be swimming the other way.

Her eyebrows went into an expression that meant, "I withdraw my 'yeah, what?' and thank you very much."

That incident drove home why it's best to dive with a backup brain.

Rec or Tek

It's become in-vogue in some quarters to bash the buddy system, but any seasoned diver, recreational or technical, can tell you that those who do so ei-



I Want My Spare Brain

BY KARL SHREEVES

ther don't know what they're talking about or they have their own agenda, not divers' best interests, in mind. While the buddy system isn't always perfect, the truth is that diving with a buddy—even in two-of-everything-and-then-some redundant tek diving—is the standard practice because there's no way to back up your own brain when diving solo.

Most dive accidents don't occur due to spontaneous bad luck, but due to human error. That's what team diving helps prevent, though there's no way to know just how many thousands of accidents it averts for rec and tek divers every year. No one counts the malfunctions or misjudgments that teammates catch during pre-dive checks. No one tracks the dive plans that change when a buddy identifies a fatal flaw. There's no annual DAN Report on dive accidents—that-could-have-happened-but-didn't.

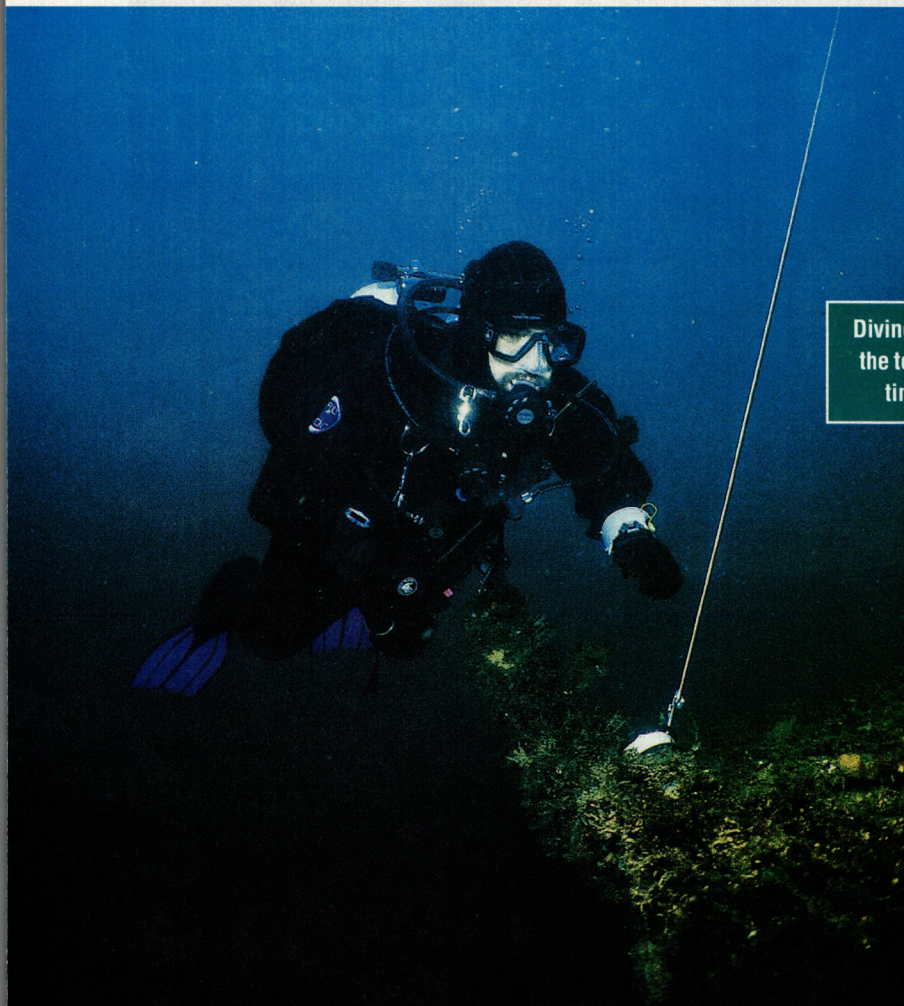
While there's no way to quantify how many accidents haven't happened because someone else was there, experienced divers know that teammates prevent accidents routinely because they've been both the "failed" brain and the "backup" brain, probably multiple times. You've most likely been on both sides of this equation yourself.

Diving solo is risky, but in the tek arena, it's sometimes appropriate.

Solo?

Despite the obvious benefits of diving with a buddy, at times it's appropriate in the tek arena to go alone. Sidemounting in tight caves is a good example. When there's barely room to move, and the visibility drops to near nothing, a teammate can't do much and becomes a liability. But even then, I prefer a teammate "in general." That is, someone with whom I can gear up, check gear and enter the cave. My buddy and I explore pre-determined areas solo and exit at prearranged times so that we both know when and where to go to provide help if necessary.

Solo diving, by definition, is tek diving (not recreational diving) because you need backup life



support beyond what the standard accepted dive kit provides. You need unwavering focus and attention to detail as you plan and dive (which you should have on any tek dive). But when you're alone, you have zero backup for your mental processes and zero reminders to follow procedures. Your error tolerance goes from low to zip.

If you choose to tek dive solo, you have to accept that you've given up your backup brain. And you also have to accept that if you get into trouble, there's no one there to help, making your chances of a rescue next to impossible. Think about it, and you understand why serious tekksers dive in well-coordinated teams the majority of the time.

While the buddy system isn't always perfect, the truth is that diving with a buddy—even in two-of-everything-and-then-some redundant tek diving—is the standard practice because there's no way to back up your own brain when diving solo.

What would have happened to my friend if the instructor and I hadn't been there? Maybe she'd have noticed line arrows telling her she was going the wrong way before it was too late. Probably, but maybe not—she'd already passed several, including those we left ourselves at the jump point. We don't know whether she'd have made it out no sweat, had a close call or even died.

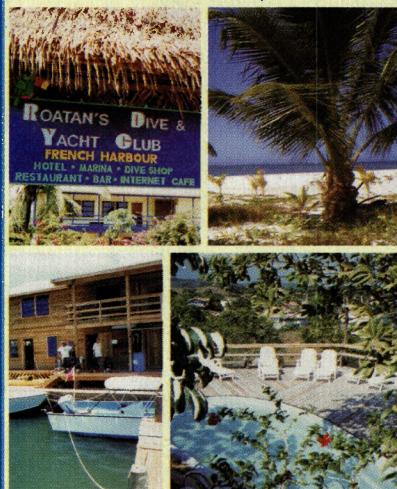
And that's the point. We don't need to know. 🐟

Karl Shreeves is VP, Technical Development for PADI and DSAT. He's an avid technical diver and a member of the DSAT World Technical Diving Division.

What's your opinion on solo diving?
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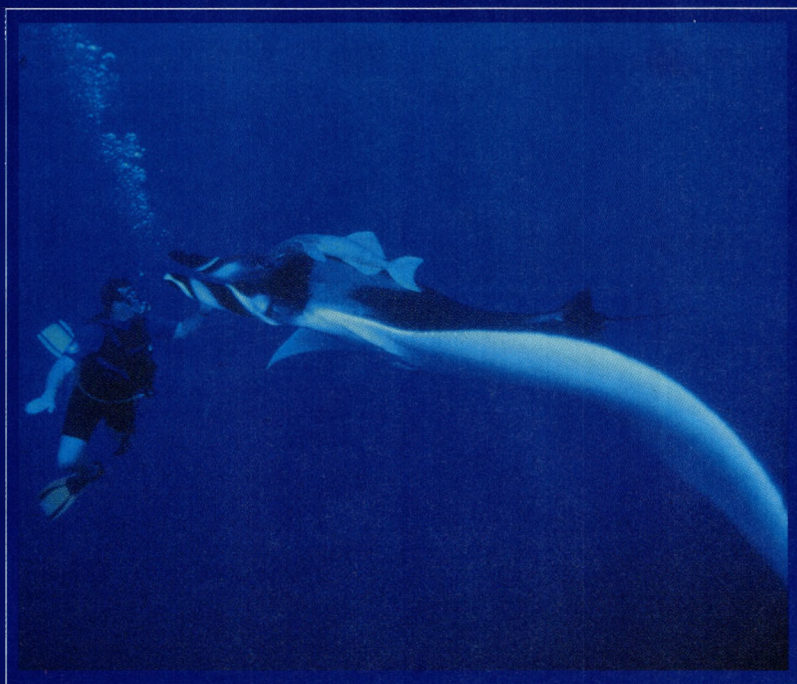
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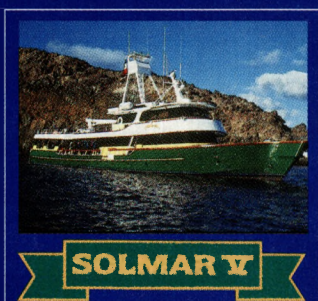
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BY DARYL CARSON

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Two winners will be treated to 13 days of diving in the warm, rich waters of the Indian Ocean. The Maldives, made up of 190 coral islands that form an archipelago of 26 major atolls, rise out of the depths south of India. Bathed in incredibly clear



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water, they are home to a diverse population of corals and marine life. Lionfish, Whale Sharks and Mantas are just a few of the members of the diver welcoming committee.

Winners can travel anytime from June 1 to August 31, 2002, and will receive 13 nights of double-occupancy accommodations at two different resorts. Included will be daily diving for two (except day of arrival and departure), complimentary internal transfers, two free *Skin Diver* anniversary T-shirts and more.

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SKIN DIVER
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The Glam

TEXT BY MANDY BOLEN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CLARA TAYLOR

It's *BIG BROTHER* meets *BAYWATCH*, WITHOUT THE CHEESY IKEA FURNITURE AND MUSIC VIDEO INTERLUDES. EIGHT PEOPLE, ONE MISSION: TO BECOME DIVE INSTRUCTORS. *SKIN DIVER* FOLLOWED THE WIDE-EYED BUNCH THROUGH THE THICK AND THICKER OF IT, AND FOUND OUT WHY THEY DECIDED TO DO IT, WHAT THEY LEARNED FROM IT, AND WHY WEARING THOSE LITTLE RED SHORTS MAKES THEM FEEL LIKE A TOP GUN.

To get the answers, *Skin Diver* visited five instructor schools, all in south Florida, and spoke with the students as they progressed through the flow chart of courses: Rescue Diver, Dive Master, Assistant Instructor and, finally, Instructor. Regardless of the acronym attached to their name at the end of the process—NAUI, PADI, SSI—the life these new dive gurus lead can look ideal to the outside observer. And while most instructors smile almost sheepishly when admitting how much they like their job, the swim to Instructor-hood is not always flat and calm with endless visibility. The reality of the job comes with its share of frustration, monotony and, yes, sunburn. So why do it?

Dreams That Run Deep

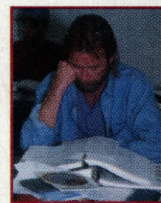
Ontario-native *Wayne Aiken* did it because he was cold.



Tired of sporting a drysuit, he hung it up and headed south to Eastern Academy of Scuba Education (EASE) in Vero Beach, FL. Leaving a harsh winter behind, Aiken wanted to wear a thin wetsuit, become an instructor and finally see some fish.

"There's no fish up there, no wildlife, no reefs," Aiken said. "But the real reason I wanted to become an instructor was to see the first smiles in people's eyes when they see their first fish underwater. It's a whole other world down there."

For Aiken's classmate at EASE, *Randy Graham*, that wondrous look on divers' faces is more than familiar. As the owner of a dive



Instructor students dressed and ready for work.

Oceanic Life

shop in Missouri, Graham had been a divemaster and assistant instructor for years, but finally chose to become an instructor to get away from it all.

"I work hard at my shop for seven months, and then I get the hell out of Dodge," he said one day while rinsing his gear.

Graham is hoping that his instructor certification will get him out of Dodge by working on a live-aboard in the tropics.

The candidates' reasons for spending several weeks in wet bathing suits and chilly pools are as varied as their aspirations for jobs once they pass the Instructor Exam.

Jason Harrison was a long way from his hometown of Indianapolis, IN, when he decided on Divers Unlimited in Pembroke Pines, just outside Fort Lauderdale.

Eastern Academy of Scuba Education (EASE)

EASE, just a few minutes north of Vero Beach, FL, is on three acres of peaceful, secluded woodland. The facility is completely self-contained and includes a classroom, pool and accommodation. Open water training for Instructor Development Courses is conducted at a private lake only five minutes from the facility.



Training at EASE includes free accommodations and meals. (Offer for free accommodation is only available for up to 10 people at each IDC, on a first-come, first-served basis.)

Job placement services are available.

Courses offered post IDC: PADI Medic First Aid Instructor Course, DAN Oxygen First Aid Instructor Course, PADI Specialty Instructor Program (MSDT), the EASE Specialty Instructor Program will thoroughly prepare you to conduct and market Specialty Diver courses, PADI Enriched Air (Nitrox) Specialty Instructor, IANTD Enriched Air (Nitrox) Blender, Dive Industry Specialist, Repair Department Technician and PADI IDC Staff Instructor

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"DU just had the best looking options for me," said Harrison, who cites his passion for diving as reason enough to become an instructor.

Yancy Stermer, who attended ProDive in Ft. Lauderdale, knew he would be returning to St. John's Northwestern Military Academy in Delafield, WI, when he finished his



certification. There he planned to train young men to give an underwater "OK" sign in lieu of a salute.

"We had a very minimal dive program at the school," he said, over a sandwich and fries during a lunch break from a ProDive lecture. He hopes to broaden the course and certify students, along with other community members, so he could share his passion with people in his hometown.

Tribal Council

Of course, these dreams come at a price. There is the time commitment, typically from two to eight weeks. (Most programs admit students who fall anywhere between Advanced Open Water to Assistant Instructor. Courses usually run in order, so candidates can begin where they need to.) There is the aforementioned sun. There are endless lectures about physics and teaching techniques. There are pool exercises and gear humping. And, there is something that can be even more grueling, living with classmates—eating, studying, diving, swimming and learning—all together.

During a visit to Hall's Diving Center in Marathon (in the Keys), program manager Randy Botteri pointed out the nearby apartments usually shared by Instructor Development Course (IDC) candidates. It is in the apartments, on the boat, at the pool's edge and in the classroom that a camaraderie develops.

"Here we go, ma'am. Today's the day," said Hall's student, *Lisa Plowman*, to her new friend, Jo Schmidt. Schmidt was preparing to retake the timed 440-yard swim in the pool under the mid-afternoon Keys' sun.



Divers Unlimited

Divers Unlimited offers year-round, Scuba Instructor training at a dedicated PADI "Career Development Center" Instructor Training Center in warm, beautiful Pembroke Pines, FL (within minutes of both the Miami and Ft. Lauderdale Int'l airports).

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Pro Dive

Pro Dive is on the beach in Fort Lauderdale, FL, at the Bahia Mar Yachting Resort and Hall of Fame Marina. This makes for an ideal, convenient, all-in-one location (10 minutes from the Fort Lauderdale International Airport). Pro Dive has four pools and four classrooms on site, along with a 60-foot custom dive vessel, the *Pro Diver II*. Economical housing is just three blocks from the school.

Job placement is available.

Courses offered post IDC: PADI Enriched Air Instructor (Nitrox I), PADI Master Scuba Diver Trainer Prep, ROS - Resort Operations Specialist, DAN REMO2™ Instructor, DAN HMLI Instructor, TDI Nitrox Gas Blender, TDI Rebreather Diver, TDI Rebreather Instructor, PADI IDC Staff Instructor, Course Director Preparation, DSAT TECREC Courses

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Plowman, herself a swimmer and former lifeguard, had easily mastered the infamous "440," but stood with her classmates at the edge of the pool to shout encouragement. Once the test was successfully completed, conversation happily turned to snorkeling plans the following day at Bahia Honda State Park, a trip to Key West and questions about the best way to cook a lobster.

The camaraderie was similar at EASE, but the conversation was vastly different. Clustered together at lunchtime, the instructor candidates were devising a

strategy to quell the snores coming each night from one of their own. The 10-person house, with a pool and a carpeted classroom, ensures that everyone learns together—whether it's dive tables or even sleep habits.

"This way, if they want, they can study physics together at 3:00 AM because they are having nightmares about it," says course director Jim McFadden, whose Belfast accent is imitated, but never perfected, by most of his students.

The student quarters at ProDive in

Fort Lauderdale have earned the dubious nickname Melrose Place because of the centrally-located pool and myriad "extracurricular" activities often brought about by the festive Fort Lauderdale atmosphere.

Workin' for a Livin'

Despite South Florida's reputation for late-night parties and recoveries on the beach, every instructor candidate acknowledges the amount of hard work, physical exertion and study required to succeed in the bevy of courses that leads to the Instructor title.

"Some people get here and find out that this is actually work," says Hall's Botteri. "It's not about piña coladas on the beach all day."

Court Stansifer, who entered Hall's Instructor program after graduating college with a history degree, was not shocked by the glaring omission of frozen drinks, but was surprised by the rigor of the skill practices in the pool.

"I was definitely humbled the first day in the pool," said the 24-year-old from Bloomington, IN, who started diving in the Philippines at age 12.

"This is not a fin-slapping extravaganza," said Hall's instructor, Bob Rhind, shaking his head and smiling at the eight fins churning the pool in a struggle to overcome their own buoyancy. "It's a two-legged surface dive—just get underwater."

The physical skills are the toughest for some students, but for others, it is the formulas and physics problems that cost them points on tests and hours of sleep.



Jamie Campbell, who passed his Instructor Exam at Ocean Divers in Key Largo, worked hard to keep up with the academics, but admits it took discipline.

"The hardest part is making yourself study," said the 24-year-old Colgate University graduate who shuddered at the thought of using his economic and geography degrees in a Manhattan cubicle. "But as long as you enjoy diving, the whole program is fun."

Fun, yes, but enjoyment is secondary, according to Ocean Divers training

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—Shane Partin (Grand Cayman)
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—Meta Boyd (Maryland)

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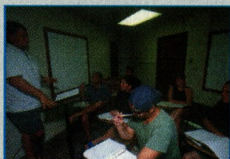
Hall's Diving Center

On the grounds of Faro Blanco Marine resort (Marathon, FL), Hall's has over 200 units, including motel rooms, efficiencies, condominiums, houseboats and cottages. Off-campus housing is available.

Hall's utilizes a number of resources for instructional aids and equipment, including their 40-foot custom dive boat, extensive library, videos and even a submarine. Hall's provides hands-on training—customers service, a repair department, phone systems, computers, displays areas and equipment (i.e. compressors and nitrox membrane blending system).

Job placement services are available.

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why most programs now offer the equivalent of a Resort Operations Course. This business-driven class is designed to remind the instructor that while safety is the primary concern, customer service is a close second and is what will keep the divers returning year after year.

Where are they now?

All of the candidates we interviewed passed their instructor exams and went to work sharing their passion for diving with others.

Lisa Plowman became an instructor at

the very place she went to school: Hall's Diving Center.

"Sometimes it just hits me that this is my job, and I am getting paid for this," she says. "My favorite part is when I get people in the pool for the first time, and see the looks on their faces."

Wayne Aiken returned to the north to work as an instructor at North Superior Scuba in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

"I've realized that it's great that I know something, but there really is an art to being able to teach it," Aiken says. "Most people either don't remember a

director Simon Selwood.

"Because the students are working with people's lives, I demand that they work hard," he says, explaining that his philosophy is not to teach candidates how to pass the instructor exam, but "to teach them how to teach."

Ryby Stonehouse, an instructor at EASE, likes to keep students interested by inspiring them to see the humor in the life of an instructor.

"It's the novel problems that make your job entertaining, and force you to ask, 'How in the world did they manage to do that?'" he says, remembering the panicked look in the eyes of a student trying to descend with a *snorkel* in his mouth.

But learning to teach skills and address the countless problems and fears each student might have are not the only job requirements for a certified instructor. The business aspect of the dive industry is one that has come more sharply into focus in recent years, as employers have told the IDC schools how important customer service is in the industry. This is

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skill or don't want to hear about what they are doing wrong."

Randy Graham returned to his own dive shop, Pontiac Dive Service, in Missouri and is hoping for a seasonal job on a live-aboard.

"I get to teach all ages, and that's what's cool," he said. "The funniest thing I've seen lately was an excited and enthusiastic divemaster candidate not think through his underwater signing.

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What he intended to convey was, 'you watch me,' but what was understood was 'you two, poke me in the nose.'"

Yancy Stermer became an instructor at St. John's Northwestern Military Academy and is working with the school to have the dive program incorporated into the main curriculum, including the various sciences associated with diving, such as physics, math and biology.

Jamie Campbell opted to stay in the Sunshine State and is now an instructor at Dive Key West in Key West, Florida.

"My favorite part of the job is taking someone who doesn't know a thing about scuba diving from beginning to end," Campbell says. "It's pretty much what I expected—I knew it wasn't going to be cushy, but I love it."

Jason Harrison became an instructor at Divers Unlimited. "Working with kids is the best part because they're fearless and they're really excited," he said, surprised at himself because he thought they would be his least favorite students.

Now, spread all over the world, these new instructors are introducing their fellow humans to the underwater world. The students have become the teachers. 🐠



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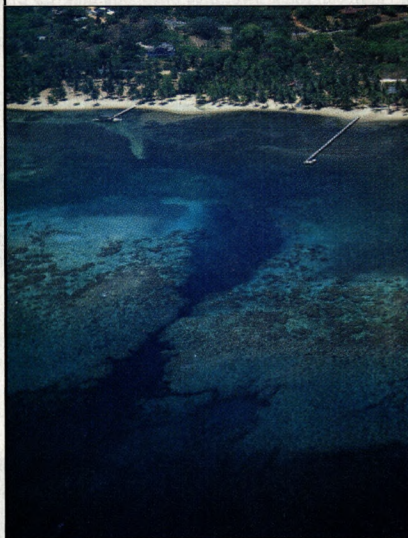
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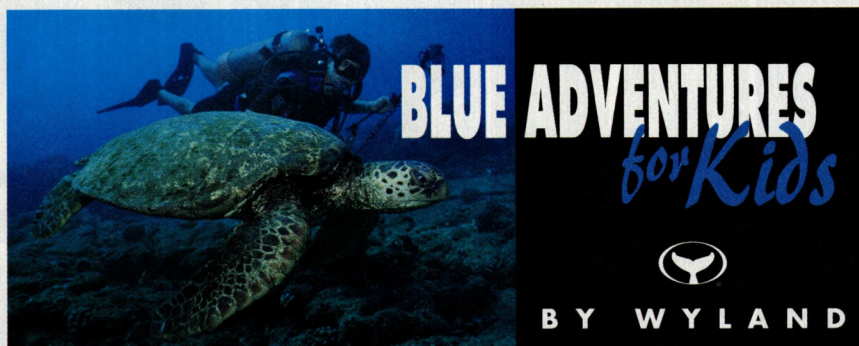
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FEAR OF SHARKS

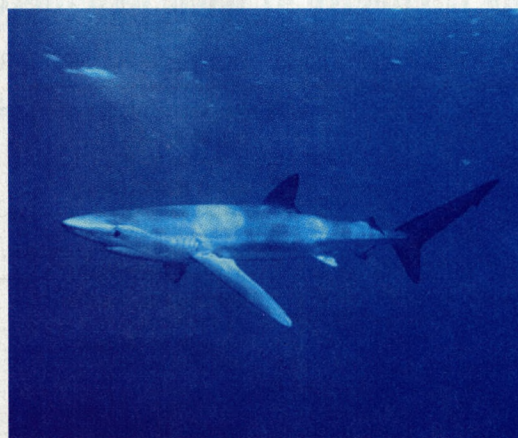
FEAR. IT COMES IN EVERY SHAPE AND form. Fear of heights. Fear of the outdoors. Fear of dentists. But ever since the 1970s, thanks to a little movie called *Jaws*, one fear in particular seems to haunt many of the people who set foot in the ocean—a fear of sharks. Not that we ever needed any help in fearing sharks. I mean, one look at these guys says it all. Some sharks, like the Mako, have rows and rows of razor-sharp teeth, powerful, crushing jaws and an agile, streamlined body. These tools make the shark the ultimate hunter in its underwater world. Unfortunately, *Jaws* cemented the images of the shark as an adversary of man—a perception that couldn't be further from the truth.

Yet the legacy of *Jaws* persists. Many adults still carry those fears with them on family junkets to the beach. Occasionally, this leads to a few nervous jokes about sharks. But no matter how well-meaning, these statements can be especially dangerous to children, who are extremely attuned to the reactions of their parents. It doesn't take much for a child to seize an idea and make it his own. Even experienced divers who know better can misrepresent the world of sharks for the sake of a good story. From there it's easy for an imagi-

native child to make the leap from a shark chowing down on a tuna to visualizing what it can do to a human leg. So the child walks away with two very damaging ideas. First, that the ocean is a bad place, and secondly, that sharks serve no other purpose than to prey on man. At a time when recreational and commercial shark harvesting has reached epic proportions, we can't afford to foster this type of attitude.

Sharks are a vital part of the marine ecosystem. And a world of children who grow up to fear sharks will do little or nothing to protect them.

I had an opportunity to experience both sides of this issue a few years ago on a shark dive off Catalina Island. After an early start, we chummed the water with a smelly gooey soup of ground-up fish guts, which, I was assured, would be ir-



Contrary to belief, sharks are generally uninterested in divers—unless, of course, the divers bring lunch.

resistible to any shark with a half-decent sense of smell. The hours passed, but we saw no sign of sharks. Feeling a little restless and bored, I hopped on the back of the plastic pool shark floater that trailed behind our boat.

If nothing else,

I thought, it would be good for a laugh.

So there I was, a piece of human bait, cracking jokes, having a good time. That must have done the trick, because within seconds I was surrounded by fins, Blues and Makos. They seemed to be everywhere. I have to admit I was pretty scared.

Bottom photo/Al Hornsby.

The idea of becoming a piece of Wyland-sized sashimi didn't exactly appeal to me, and I asked to be pulled in quickly.

Back on deck, I found the sharks were not interested in me, after all, but merely following millions of years of evolution. Thanks to senses keenly aware of the slightest smell of blood in the water, they had tracked down a potential food source. I just happened to be in the middle of it. Still, I was eager to re-enter the water, although this time I was happily protected by an aluminum shark cage. The experience of watching the fluid movements of

Sharks are a vital part of the marine ecosystem. And a world of children who grow up to fear sharks will do little or nothing to protect them.

the sharks in their own environment is nearly impossible to describe.

Whatever fear I had turned to excitement as a small group of Blue Sharks swam within a few feet of my cage, made a 90 degree turn and glided through the water with a grace and agility unequaled by any creature on land. They seemed to have no fear of us and certainly were not aggressive in any way. Encouraged by this, I decided to open the cage door and join the sharks in their natural environment.

There we were, both species curious, but not threatening. This was how it should be, I thought. I don't have any illusions about sharks. They are highly developed hunters. But the reality is that they have been here a lot longer than we have, and their health is vital to the health of our oceans.

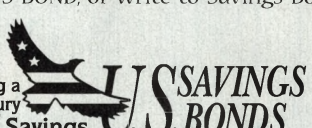
With humans depleting their numbers faster than they can reproduce, maybe we need to let our children know that it isn't we who should fear sharks. But rather, given our track record, maybe it's the sharks who should fear us. 



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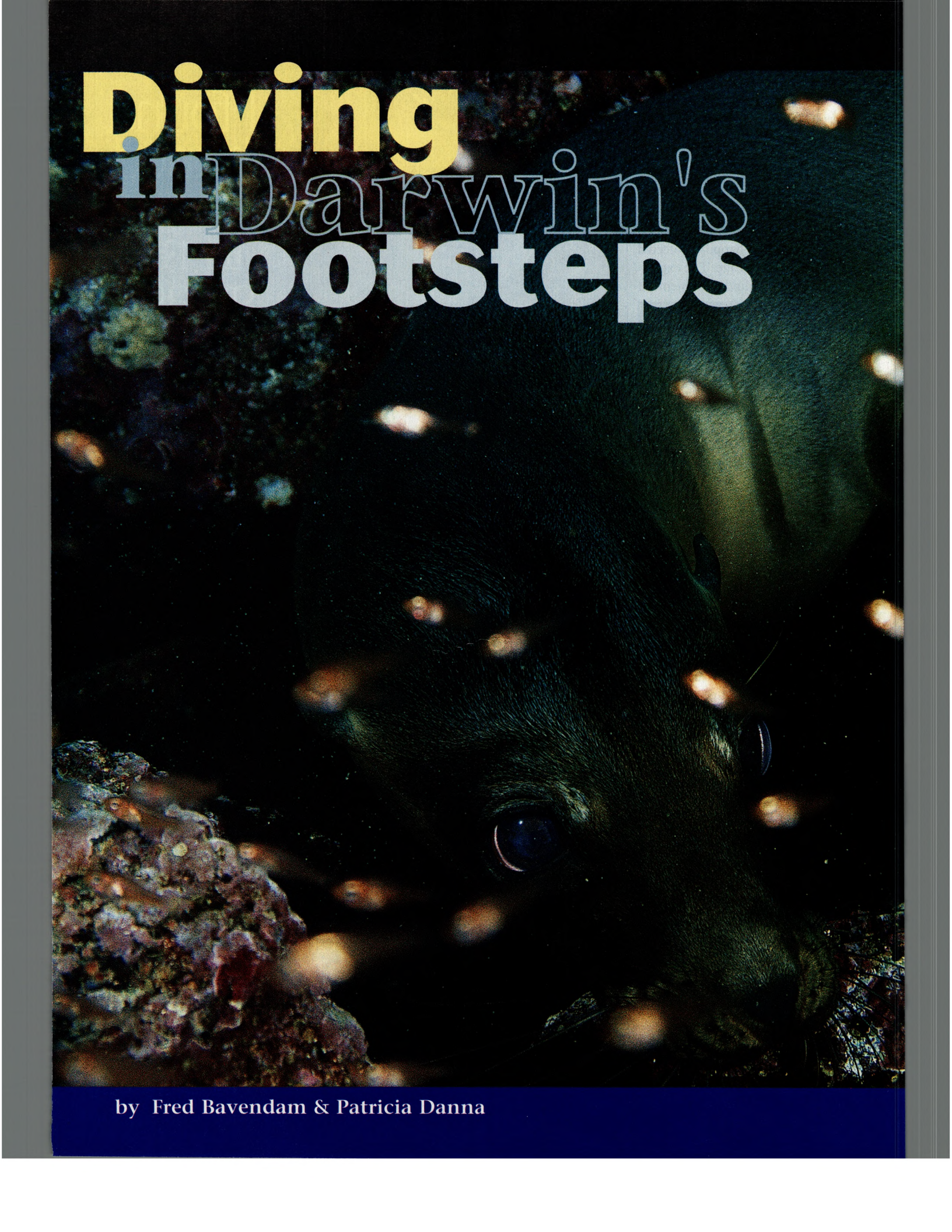
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Skin Diver

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Diving in Darwin's Footsteps

by Fred Bavendam & Patricia Danna

the Galapagos Islands



In the autumn of 1835, Charles Darwin spent five weeks among the islands of the Galapagos archipelago, making observations of the local fauna that would be crucial in the development of his theory of evolution. In the spring of 2001, Pat and I spent a similar amount of time in the Galapagos, observing many of the same kinds of animals Darwin encountered and discovering a side of the Galapagos virtually unknown to Darwin—the world beneath Galapagos waters. What might Darwin have written of the Galapagos if he had seen, as we did, thousands of Galapagos Garden Eels waving back and forth elegantly above the sandy ocean floor? Or scores of Scalloped Hammerheads passing only 10 feet above his head? Would he have been able to keep his thoughts on finches?

What has made the Galapagos Islands so unique is their relatively recent birth, only four to five million years ago, through volcanic action and their distance from other land masses. Straddling the equator approximately 600 miles west of the South American continent, the Galapagos archipelago was almost totally isolated, in a biological sense, until discovered by men in sailing ships.

Also remarkable is the number of endemic species, the animals that are found nowhere else in the world. Twenty-two of the 29 resident Galapagos land birds are endemic, as are 20 of 22 reptiles. Underwater, the story is much the same. Almost 20 percent of the resident marine life is endemic. Among the Galapagos' endemics are giant tortoises, the only penguins that live anywhere near the equator and the world's only seagoing lizard, the Marine Iguana. Almost totally lacking among those few successful colonizers were terrestrial carnivores. In their absence, over thousands of years and countless generations, the Galapagos animals lost their fear of other animals and of man. And that is the Galapagos' greatest attraction—the approachability of its wildlife.

Most divers equate Galapagos with big animals—sharks, rays, sea turtles and sea lions. The best place to find them is at Wolf and Darwin, two small islands 100 miles north of the central islands.

Three days into our first cruise I was hanging onto a large black rock 60 feet below the *Lammer Law*'s zodiacs, which had dropped us into the water at the base of Wolf Island's towering cliffs. Almost from the moment I rolled off the inflatable I had been fighting the current, a task

A young Galapagos Sea Lion hides behind a curtain of tiny fish.



Strong currents bring out the big boys, like this Galapagos Shark.

made even more difficult by my big underwater housing and its two strobes. Finally I found what I needed, a rock I could cling to that was sheltered from the current, but which still allowed reasonable views of approaching animals. From my vantage point, I had seen both Scalloped Hammerheads and Galapagos Sharks. And now, swimming almost directly toward me, was a Spotted Eagle Ray. But its course would take it just far enough away that I would have to go out into the current to meet it. Letting go of my mooring, I began kicking as hard as I could, and to my surprise, the Eagle Ray altered its course in my direction. For the next few exhilarating, exhausting minutes I swam beside the ray as it glided gracefully, almost effortlessly, against a current that had my legs burning and my lungs bursting. Feeling spent, I had to fall back. But in those few minutes I shot almost a full roll of film from just a few feet away, more Eagle Ray pictures than I had taken in the previous 10 years.

Back aboard the *Lammer Law* everyone was excited. Our dive guide, Antonio, said that several Galapagos Sharks had dashed straight at him, rather than swimming by in their usual slow manner. My partner, Pat, had her own close encounter.

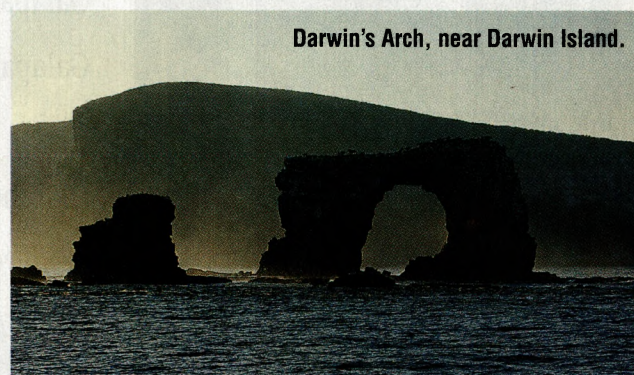
Lammer Law

The *Lammer Law* is a big roomy trimaran with eight cabins for 16 passengers, each with air-conditioning. The lounge is huge, with big soft chairs and sofas—perfect to sink into while listening to a briefing or watching a video in the evening. Dining was in the open air, under a canopy on the back deck. There also seemed to be an undefinable joy-of-life on board, and it was totally in character to find the crew giving salsa dancing lessons in the lounge, everyone whooping it up to the music.



As she was hanging out at the surface, waiting to be picked up by the zodiac, a Green Sea Turtle had swum right up and grabbed onto her fin with its front flippers.

The following day, at Darwin Island, Antonio led us to a sandy patch in shallow water where the hammerheads came to be cleaned by King Angelfish. We watched as a 10-foot female dropped out of the school and drifted just a few feet above the bottom. Just as she got to a particular set of boulders, half a dozen dark blue angelfish shot upward and began picking at several areas on her body where the skin had been torn open. After the dive, Antonio told us that her injuries had probably occurred during mating, when the males



Darwin's Arch, near Darwin Island.

bite the females to hold onto them. Sharks play rough.

Less than a week later, Pat and I embarked on our second dive cruise of the trip, this time aboard the *Galapagos Aggressor*. Our first dive was in the channel between Baltra and North Seymour Islands. Compared to our earlier dives at Wolf and Darwin, the current was almost insignificant. Immediately after touching down on the sandy bottom 40 feet below, we entered the largest garden eel colony I had ever seen. Thousands of the endemic Galapagos Garden Eels stretched up into the gentle current for as far as I could see in almost every direction. Following Jamie, our guide, we came to an area filled with schools of different kinds of reef fish—Yellow-tailed Surgeonfish, Goatfish and several types of snappers. It was a photographer's delight, and dilemma. There are only 36 shots on a roll of film. Pat wandered off in one direction and shot pictures of Whitetip Sharks, while I went the other way and came across a large Marbled Stingray digging in the sand, surrounded by other fish. That finished my roll.

Several days later, we were at Darwin Island again. The water was filled with small red juvenile Creole Fish, hanging like a blanket a few feet above the rocky bottom. I was swim-

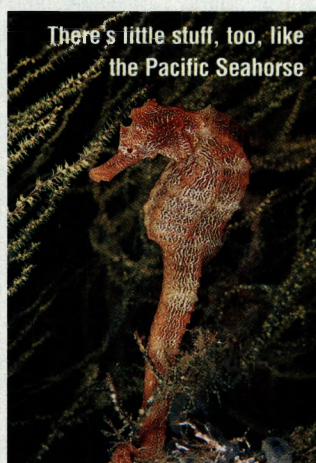
Photos/Fred Bavendam

ming through a red blizzard and found it almost impossible to take pictures of anything without the Creole Fish getting in the way. I tried rising to the highest rock I could find, just above the Creole Fish. But the red blanket moved up and enveloped me again. Finally, I went deeper, to where the Creole Fish thinned out a bit. It was there that I found a big moray eel peering out from between the rocks, looking up at a red cloud above him. Was he as amazed as I was or merely contemplating Creole Fish cuisine?

In his trip journal, *Voyage of the Beagle*, Darwin wrote of throwing the same Marine Iguana into the ocean repeatedly, only to have it swim directly back to shore and refuse to enter the water to escape him. He commented, "Perhaps this singular piece of apparent stupidity may be accounted for by the circumstance, that this reptile has no enemy whatever on shore, whereas at sea it must often fall a prey to the numerous sharks." Considering the problems any cold-blooded reptile has with thermoregulation, I think that the poor lizard just got too damn cold. After all, despite being warm-blooded, I still needed a full 3 mm neoprene wetsuit and sometimes a 3 mm hooded chicken vest to maintain my own body temperature on many dives.

Although diving in the Galapagos is one of the more rewarding experiences I've had, it certainly wasn't one of the easiest. The current, and/or the surge, can be brutal. That's when you have to "devolve." Put on a tough pair of gloves, don a wetsuit with really good knee and elbow pads, add a few more pounds to your weight belt and crawl. Pull yourself hand over hand to the edge of the reef, wedge yourself between the rocks and watch the show of your life. Because when the current is at its worst, the action is at its best. Current-heavy Wolf and Darwin islands were where we saw the biggest schools of hammerheads, the most Galapagos Sharks and Green Sea Turtles and the only dolphins of our trip. So learn to love the current or at least to live with it.

One of the last dives of our Aggressor trip was at Cousins Rock—and again a photographer's dilemma. Jamie told us we



There's little stuff, too, like the Pacific Seahorse

should be able to find seahorses and maybe a frogfish hiding among the bushy yellow and black corals on one side of the island. But on the other side were sea lions and fur seals. And not even the mid-range zoom could do all of that. So on the first of our two dives I put on a macro lens and followed Jamie down, and we found both the seahorses and a frogfish. On the second dive, I went the other way—with a wide-angle for pin-

nepeds. I got lucky and had a Galapagos Fur Seal hang in the water right beside me, his big black eyes staring into mine.

The Galapagos have been called the "Encantadas," which means enchanted or bewitched. We were both. These islands have infected us and there is only one cure. To go back. 🐡

Special thanks to Aggressor Fleet and Trimarine.



A Fine Spotted Moray watches a parade of juvenile Creole Fish.

The Galapagos Aggressors

The mono-hulled Galapagos Aggressors (there are two) support a maximum of 14 divers in seven cabins. The combined dining room/lounge is enclosed, with fixed dining tables and benches. Both it and the individual cabins are air-conditioned. The Aggressors' prime directive seems to be to offer the best service possible and have conveniences for the serious photographer, including large rinse tanks, dive deck workbenches, a dedicated charging station and E-6 processing.



Skin Diver GUIDE Galapagos

GETTING THERE: Quito and Guayaquil, Ecuador, both have international airports with frequent direct connections to Houston, Los Angeles, Miami and New York. The region's main international hub is Lima, Peru, and you may find it cheaper to fly to Peru and continue over land to Ecuador (a 24-hour bus trip). There's a U.S. \$25 airport departure tax.

GALAPAGOS ISLANDS FACTS & TIPS:

Best Time To Visit: Year-round.

Topside Climate: Two seasons: Hot season, from December through May with strong sun and temperatures in the 80 to 90°F, with the possibility of heavy local rains. Garua season, June through September, is often misty in the morning with generally cooler daytime temperatures of 70 to 80°F.

Water Temperature: Extremely variable; ranges from low 60°F to mid-80°F, dependent upon currents, upwellings and thermocline depth.

Exchange Rate: The U.S. dollar is now Ecuador's official currency. You will need \$100 in cash upon arrival in the Galapagos for your National Park entry fee, and a \$25 departure fee when you fly out of Ecuador.

Time Difference: Eastern Standard Time minus 1 hour. There's no daylight-saving.

Live-aboards & Dive Operators: *Lammer Law*

(Trimarine Boat Co.) (284) 494-2490 www.galapagosdiving.com • *Galapagos Aggressor I and II* (800) 348-2628 www.aggressor.com • *Peter Hughes' Sky Dancer* (800) 9-DANCER www.peterhughes.com • *Aquatic Encounters* (Live-aboard: *Reina Silvia*) (303) 494-8384 www.aquaticencounters.com

RESOURCES: Galapagos.org, www.galapagos.org • Skin Diver Online, www.skin-diver.com



A Remora hitchhikes a ride on a mammoth Manta Ray.

living large

A large Manta Ray is swimming in deep blue water. A diver is visible near its head, and another diver is further back. The title 'living large' is overlaid on the image.

The Manta Ray right in front of me had a pair of three-foot-long Remoras riding upside down atop its head, and that trio was accompanied by a squadron of jacks strung out behind the Manta's tail. As I approached the crew, the jacks scurried away from me and tucked themselves under the Manta's massive mid-section.

Then, without warning, the 15-foot-wide wings went still. At first I thought something was wrong, and I quickly checked the water around me expecting to see a Whale Shark or a school of hammerheads nearing.

Seconds later, the Manta's intent became quite clear. It had parked just above a cleaning station on the reef. As if called to service by the ring of a bell, a pair of burnt-orange Clarion Angelfish rose up from the rocks and began pecking away at the Manta's skin. I raised my camera's viewfinder to my eye to frame the scene, and then...

I Woke Up

It was 2:48 AM and I had been dreaming—sort of. It was

more of a flashback to my previous trip to the Socorro Islands off Mexico, between 220 and 400 miles south of the southern tip of the Baja peninsula. Three days later, I would once again be heading off to the Socorro, to dive from the *Solmar V*. And once again, I was hoping to encounter the legendary Manta Rays.

Funny what our minds do—at least I hope other folks' minds work the same way. Even with 25 plus years of diving, at the age of 51, I had that kid-on-Christmas-Eve feeling. I love to dive, but I freely admit, I rarely get so worked up that I am too excited to sleep. However, I still feel that way when I go to the Socorro.

Of course, the area is not just known for Mantas. The Socorro are home to Silky Sharks, Scalloped Hammerheads, Galapagos Sharks, Silvertips, Oceanic Whitetips, Whitetip Reef Sharks, thick schools of jacks, Wahoo, tuna, Marlin, turtles, dolphins and a whole lot more. It was the allure of the big boys that woke me up and kept me up. I couldn't help but wonder just what I would see.

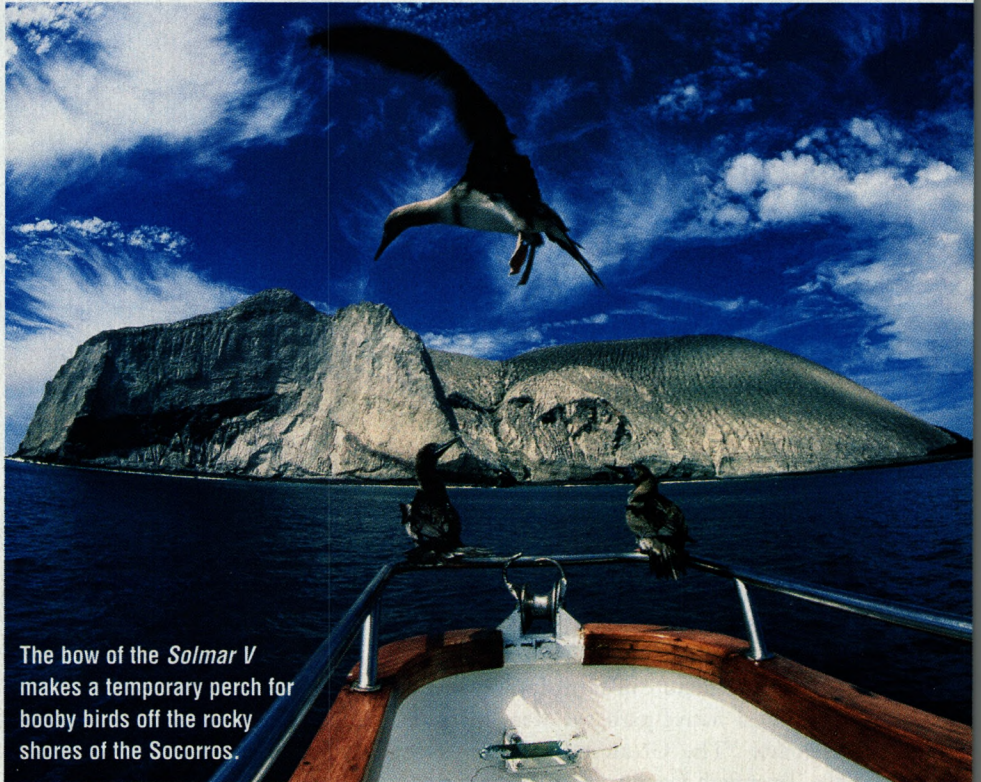
in the Socorros

The Socorros consist of four islands, San Benedicto, Socorro (the largest), Roca Partida (the smallest) and Clarion. On most maps you will see the island group referred to as the Revillagigedos (ray-vee-ya-he-hay-dose), but that name proves tricky for most gringo tongues, so a few years ago, boat captains and divemasters began to refer to the entire group as the Socorros. This is live-aboard country, where the big boys swim and the waters feel wild and unconquerable. That feeling of wilderness is what attracts me to this place. There really is no telling what will show up, or when.

Dreams Really Do Come True

By my second dive, I found myself amidst a group of seven Manta Rays at a site known as The Boiler. I had already encountered two hammerheads, one turtle and four or five Silky Sharks, and now this. The rays swam circles and loops around us, and occasionally, a Manta would stop dead and hover only a foot or so away.

At the end of a great diving day I flip-pantly told Jose Luis, owner of the *Solmar V*, that he had shot himself in the foot with this one. "You should have



The bow of the *Solmar V* makes a temporary perch for booby birds off the rocky shores of the Socorros.

Solmar V

The *Solmar V* visits the Socorros every year from November through May. The 112-foot live-aboard offers 12 individual state-rooms with full private bath-rooms, color TVs and VCRs.



saved a little something for the rest of the trip," I said.

"Don't sweat it," he said. "I have a little something up my sleeve."

That little something up Jose's sleeve turned out to be a small rock, 73

miles from San Benedicto, called Roca Partida. On one dive I saw big schools of two species of tuna, Wahoo, a Marlin and seven species of shark—including Scalloped Hammerheads, Silvertip, Whitetip Reef and Oceanic Whitetips. In fact, while trying to frame an Oceanic Whitetip, I looked up and found myself swimming underneath a Whale Shark. No kidding—on one tank. Jose definitely had an ace in the hole.

Late one afternoon we dived a spot known as The Aquarium. I had wanted to look at the macro world, so on this dive I kept my head in the reef and found octopi, moray eels, Redtail Triggerfish, Giant Hawkfish and Coral Hawkfish.

Shortly after the last dive of our trip, we picked up the

anchor and started the day-long trek back to Cabo San Lucas. Some of my shipmates began to discuss their next live-aboard vacation and where they would like to go. I hope I come right back to the Socorros. My only problem with

that is I know I won't sleep worth a damn for a week before my trip. I'll toss and turn with visions of Mantas dancing in my head. Bet you would too. 🐟

Special thanks to the staff and crew of the Solmar V.

Skin Diver GUIDE Socorros

GETTING THERE: Several major airlines service Los Cabos daily. Upon arrival, it's easiest to take a taxi to Cabo San Lucas to board the *Solmar V*.

FACTS & TIPS: Mexico's four volcanic Revillagigedos Islands are between 220 to 400 miles south of Baja California's tip. The islands are uninhabited other than a naval base on Socorro, and off-limits to divers. The closest decompression chamber is in Cabo San Lucas. Humpback Whales visit during the cooler winter months.

Best Time To Visit: These islands are only visited November through mid-June.

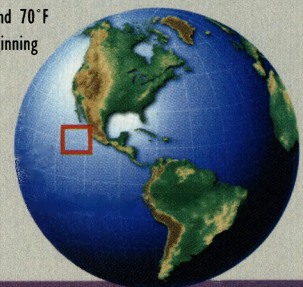
Topside Climate: Tropically warm, ranging 75 to 90°F. A light jacket might be useful. But remember, this is a dive trip and the islands are off limits.

Water Temperature: Around 80°F in the fall and 70°F in the spring. In late January, February, March and the beginning of April the water is a bit cooler at 70 to 74°F.

Exchange Rate: 1.00 (USD) = 9.215 (Peso)

Time Difference: Eastern Standard Time minus 2 hours.

Live-aboards: *Solmar V* (800) 344-3349, www.solmar.com



Two lonely outposts perched on the empty blue field of the Eastern Pacific, Malpelo and Cocos Island draw pelagics in from hundreds of miles away.

The Westmorlands set out to these far away islands on the ultimate live-aboard trip.

It was the perfect prelude to an adventure. The Annual Explorers Club Dinner in New York City was an exotic affair, with wine-marinated, rose hair tarantulas daintily offered as *canapés* to such luminaries as Sylvia Earle and Neil Armstrong. Mingling with diners dressed in a bizarre mixture of formal black tie and traditional native garb, we were there to celebrate "The Greatest Explorations of the Twentieth Century." As fellow guests fumbled with barbecued scorpions and sautéed mealy worms, we pondered the current age of exploration. Scuba divers are one of the few groups of people who can visit somewhere utterly new on a two-week holiday. And we were just about to set off for two islands where exploration is still part of the diving experience.

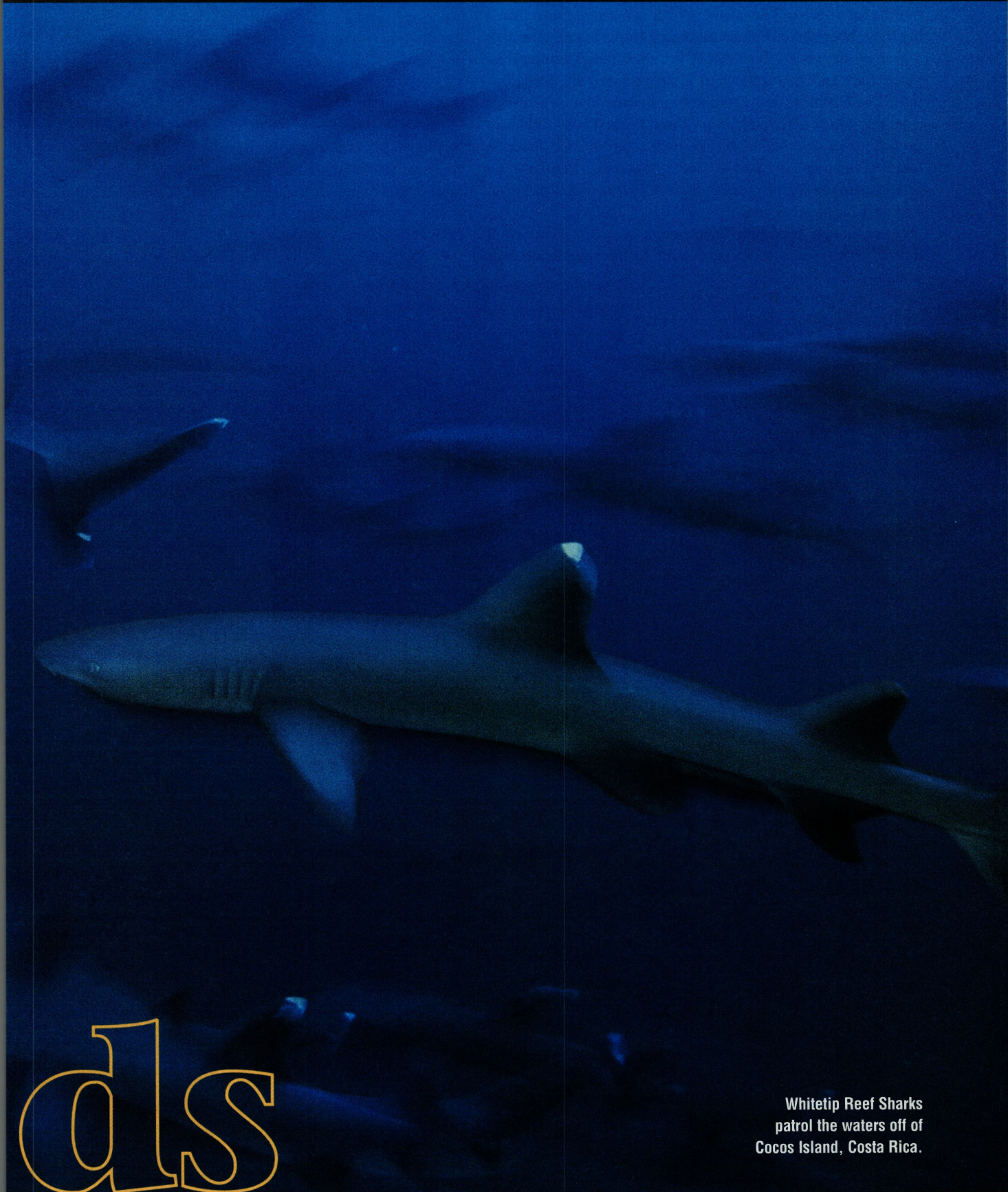
Greetings

Our cruise departed at noon from the industrial port of Puntarenas, Costa Rica. An hour after sunset, Bottlenose Dolphins frolicked before the *Sea Hunter's* bow. It was pitch-black, and we had to grope our way along the rail. Riding the bow wave were a dozen seven-foot dolphins—leaping, splashing and leaving bright trails in the bioluminescent water. The acrobatic cetaceans slapped their strong tails, sounding off sonic explosions and creating ethereal flashes of green light with little sparkles of sea fairy dust. It reminded us of the Fourth of July.



lost world

Fast Lane at **Malpelo** and **Cocos**



ds

Whitetip Reef Sharks
patrol the waters off of
Cocos Island, Costa Rica.

By **Stuart and Michele Westmorland**

Malpelo—the Island of Bad Hair

Almost two full days after departing, we arrived at Malpelo in time for sunrise. The island, which is nothing more than a big rock about 900 feet high and twice as long, loomed through a haze of fog on the horizon. A primeval mood gripped the place. Bare and inhospitable, it is far removed from civilization. The outline of the island resembled an old man's head as if he was lying on his back: heavy brow, hooked nose and lower lip fallen to a shapeless chin. For such a barren rock, it seems odd that the name in Spanish means "bad hair." Perhaps it's a reference to the sparse grass and lichen that manage to eke out a meager existence there.

Even though we'd arrived on calm seas, the synergy of forces that converge at Malpelo create formidable diving conditions. Cold layers of water around 60°F meet warm surface layers of upper 70°F water to form impressive upwellings. Long swells that barely make a ripple on the open ocean meet the vertical rock cliffs of Malpelo and are converted into shifting swells and unpredictable currents. There are dozens of large caves and swim-through arches that have to be completely avoided because of the dangerous vortices, down-currents and surge. The shallow rocks are covered in baseball-sized, razor-sharp barnacles; sea urchins vie with giant moray eels for the remaining real estate. The diving conditions are not for the faint-hearted.

With reef names like The Freezer, Monster Rock and Shark Place, the site of our first dive at Malpelo sounded relatively benign—Virginia's Altar. After struggling into several layers of neoprene in the tropical heat, it was a relief to finally get in the water. At 78°F, the surface layer was balmy. But after passing massive schools of grunts and surgeonfish near 40 feet, we were blasted by a colder layer of water. A brutal upwelling ushered in a temperature drop of at least 15°F, which hit our bodies like a winter blizzard. Cruising just above the thermocline were hordes of

Sea Hunter

We were aboard the 115-foot *Sea Hunter*, which offers a special two-week Malpelo/Cocos charter three times a year, as weather permits.



Beefy Scalloped Hammerhead Sharks (*Sphyrna Lewini*) swarm Malpelo Island.



Scalloped Hammerheads, apparently smart enough to stay in the warmer water. Hundreds of moray eels occupied every nook and cranny in the sloping wall. Easing back into the warm but murky water, we found that the swell had intensified. It was easiest to do what the fish do—just go with the flow. We were back in the pack of Bluestriped Grunts. Among

them were trumpetfish that seemed to be the size of tubas. We had been told that everything at Malpelo is unusually large. Only the hardest individuals can survive the long trip from the nearest reef hundreds of miles away, so this ocean oasis offers premium examples of natural selection.

There are more large Green Morays at Malpelo than anywhere we've ever seen. They are so numerous that space is hard to come by, and legions of morays can be seen undulating over the reefs, often stalking prey.

In true exploratory fashion, we got to dive a virgin site that had been mapped the last time the *Sea Hunter* visited Malpelo. It turned out to be one of the best dives of the trip. It required a difficult descent in a ripping current to reach the top of the mount at 90 feet. At 59°F, this was the coldest water we had encountered on the trip, but it was worth the chill. Two orange-red Tassled Scorpionfish, looking like blocks of molten lava, squared off on this current-blasted rock, which had never before been visited by divers. Octopi prowled the rock's surface, while large groups of leather bass and snapper fed in a frenzy on small cardinalfish that hid among sea urchins. Colorful Pink Encrusting Sponge and vivid Orange Cup Corals covered much of the mount. Whitetip Reef Sharks cruised the perimeter, alongside squadrons of Green and Island Jacks. Bluefin Trevally bulleted through the tightly-packed schooling fish, testing the shoals for a straggler to snack on. Even hanging on the anchor line for our safety stop proved fascinating as planktonic

We took a step outside the normal itinerary to take on the challenging hike to Cocos' Yglesias Waterfall. It required several hours, but the beauty and solitude of this photogenic spot was well worth it.

The 400-foot-high Yglesias waterfall.



Cocos Island's rocky shoreline makes it impossible to beach the *Sea Hunter's* chase boats, so we stowed our cameras in a waterproof box and were dropped off a short swim from shore. For much of the year, heavy surge renders even this type of landing impossible. However, we scrambled up the rocky beach with relative ease. The trail takes in a lush rain forest, including copey trees, Roosevelt palms and three tree species endemic to the island. Red bromeliads decorated many of the tree branches and added splashes of color to the predominantly green landscape.

The Sanctuary of Fauna and Flora of Malpelo Island is a protected area of the National Park Unit of the Ministry of Environment of Colombia. For more info, e-mail ecoturismo@minambiente.gov.co.

Malpelo and Cocos



A face-off between two Tasseled Scorpionfish.

octopi the size of my thumbnail drifted by. The site was duly named Hugo Rock, after our captain, who originally pinpointed it on the depth finder.

Our last dives on Malpelo were memorable for the quantity and size of Hammerheads we encountered. We saw colossal pregnant females that must have been nine feet long. Our best shark encounters took place near the numerous cleaning stations. And if you kept still in a rocky hiding place, held your breath and timed a break in the slamming surge, you would usually be rewarded by an impressive broadside of Scalloped Hammerheads. They were stacked dozens deep and drifted into viewing range only to disappear when we exhaled. The dive ended on a high note: A school of Spotted Eagle Rays circled in what appeared to be a farewell salute.

Before heading off to Cocos, we tried in vain to find the fabled Rivaldeneyera Seamount. Local fishermen tell tales of massive schools of sharks boiling in its waters. But, it remains a mystery for the next trip.

The Legendary Cocos

Arriving in the wee hours at Cocos Island, the first dawn view was one we'd never forget. The steep emerald cliffs were striped with dozens of spectacular waterfalls that cascaded for hundreds of feet. About 13 miles in circumference, Costa Rica declared Cocos a national park in 1978 and a World Heritage Site in 1997. It now houses a small group of park rangers—men and women present on the island since 1993, who have devoted themselves to the study and protection of this uniquely wild place. A deep green rain forest blankets all but the steepest cliffs in dense jungle vegetation. Cocos was the inspiration for Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park* and also provided some of the dramatic footage shown in the blockbuster movie.

With the lush topside topography of Cocos contrasting so obviously with barren Malpelo, we wondered what its underwater environment had in store for us. Our morning dive at El Bajo Manuelita brought a round of post-dive applause. The water temperature was a balmy 82°F, with visibility nearly 100 feet. A few Hammerheads were sighted, but they looked like

babies after the bulky giants of Malpelo. It felt quite strange to be suddenly diving in warm, clear water with only gentle surge, although we knew that conditions could change quickly. The sea life was similar to Malpelo in terms of prolific schools of fish. But unlike Malpelo, Whitetip Reef Sharks and Marbled Rays can be seen all over the reefs. There are also a great many lobsters, which crawl around in the open or cluster together in crevices in groups of up to 20.

The best dive site of Cocos—and possibly the best in the Pacific—can be seen at a legendary seamount known as Alcyone. Named after the Cousteau Society boat that made a visit in 1987, it can be a testing dive. The most shallow portion of this craggy and irregular seamount is about 90 feet deep.

Currents can be extreme, but the fish life is always awesome. Only one dive per day is allowed because of the depths involved, so we returned there on four successive mornings. Highlights included: A Whale Shark that circled the seamount five times; the best Hammerhead encounters of the trip; six Mobula Rays swimming together near our ascent/descent line; mating Whitetip Reef Sharks; courting behavior with groups of Marbled Rays; monstrous Yellowfin Tuna; and giant schools of jacks and grunts.

Who would have guessed that two lonely remote islands could be home for such an underwater community. 🐟

Special thanks to the Sea Hunter, Alta Travel Planners, Parque del Lago Hotel, Sunset Reef Marine Hotel, Ecolodge San Luis and Hotel Alta for their assistance.

Skin Diver GUIDE Malpelo and Cocos

GETTING THERE: San José, Costa Rica, is served by several airlines. Daily, direct flights originate in Miami, Houston and Dallas. You must arrive one night prior to the boat departure.

Best Time To Visit: The dry season is from November to April. The late-December to mid-April dry season is the most pleasant. April, May and mid-October to mid-December should give you the best of both worlds.

Topside Climate: Temperatures are between 80 and 95°F during the day, but may cool down to 70°F during winter evenings.

Water Temperature: 75 to 80°F (Cocos), and 60 to 80°F (Malpelo).

Exchange Rate: 1.00 (USD) = 328.77 CRC (Costa Rica Colones).

Time Difference: Eastern Standard Time minus 2 hours. No daylight-saving time.

Live-aboards & Dive Operators: Okeanos Aggressor (800) 348-2628

www.aggressor.com • Sea Hunter & Undersea Hunter (800) 203-2120 www.underseahunter.com

Resorts: Parque del Lago Hotel (San José, operates pickup service for transfers to Sea Hunter), e-mail: parklago@sol.racsa.co.cr

• Sunset Reef Marine Hotel (011) 506-640-0012 e-mail: info@altatravelplanner.com • Ecolodge San Luis (011) 506-380-3255 e-mail: info@altatravelplanner.com • Hotel Alta (011) 506-282-4160 e-mail: hotalta@sol.racsa.co.cr

RESOURCES: Instituto Costarricense Turismo (800) 343-6332 www.tourism-costarica.com • Lonely Planet Guide to Costa Rica, www.lonelyplanet.com • Skin Diver Online, www.skin-diver.com



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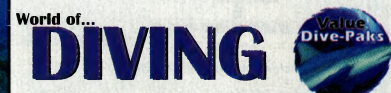
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by Marty Snyderman

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In the Florida Keys, wrecks also double as outstanding reefs.



big grouper greet divers.

Yet further south, the coastline bends away and breaks up into the Florida Keys. More than 200 islands lie between Key Largo in the northeast and Key West in the southwest, with Looe Key smack in the middle. If you want beautiful, shallow dives and good viz in waters that are loaded with colorful tropical fishes and invertebrates, the Keys is your place. If you want a chance to swim with turtles, barracudas, Jewfish, eels and sharks, the Keys is your place. And if you want some great wreck dives, where big amberjack, sharks, and schooling cudas hang out, you got it, the Keys is your place once again. Dive operators in the Keys provide a wide variety of

The East Coast of the United States

New England, Carolinas, Florida Gold Coast, Florida Keys

Divers have long treasured the waters along the east coast of the United States. From New England to North Carolina to Key West at the southwestern extreme of the Florida Keys, there are wrecks, reefs and marine life enough to satisfy the underwater explorer's appetite.

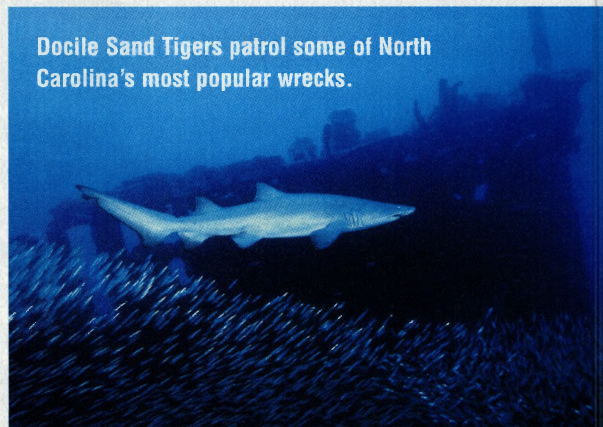
Boat rides with established charter operators are the best way to get to the lobster grounds and historic shipwrecks off the coasts of New England. Some of the wrecks are best suited for those with training in technical diving, like the famed

Andrea Doria, but there is a wealth of great diving for those with open water and advanced certifications, too.

Wrecks are also the main attraction when diving in North Carolina's waters. More than 80 accessible wrecks that range from German U-boats to passenger liners to cargo vessels can be explored in depths that vary from 30 to 160 feet or more. Eddies in the Gulf Stream bathe these wrecks with warm water and bring numerous species typically associated with Caribbean diving.

Further south, the Florida coastline offers up prolific artificial reef programs and the beginnings of true coral reefs. The Gold Coast (named for the many Spanish Galleons wrecks on these shores), includes West Palm Beach, Boca Raton, Ft. Lauderdale and Miami. Some of the state's best wrecks are here, adorned in sponges, bursting with tropical colors and loaded with fish. Schools of grunts, jacks, snappers and the occasional

Docile Sand Tigers patrol some of North Carolina's most popular wrecks.



trips ranging from single dives to week-long vacations. 🐟

FLORIDA

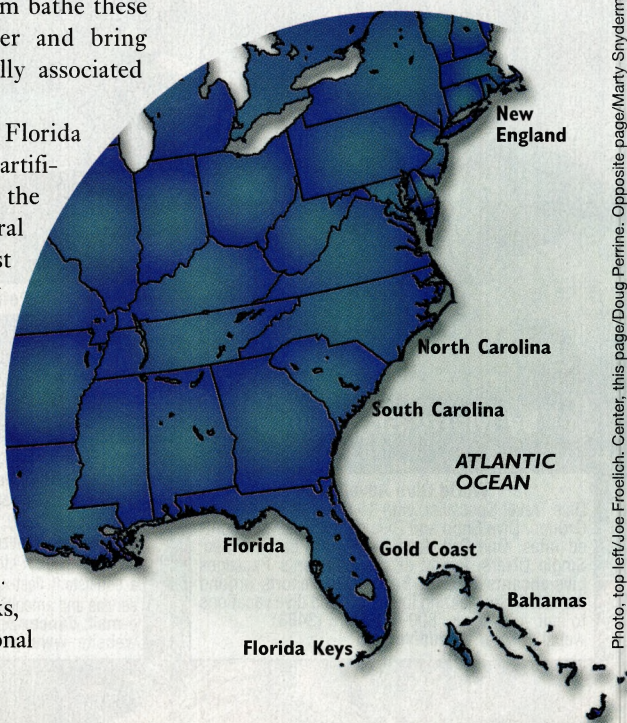
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The Tropical Atlantic

Bermuda, The Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, Brazil

Off the U.S. Eastern seaboard, 650 miles east of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina is the self-governing island colony of Bermuda. With more than 200 square miles of pristine coral reefs, this archipelago also features some of the best reef and wreck diving in the

from land-based accommodations and numerous live-aboards.

The Bahamas consists of 25 major



The Bahamas are world famous for dolphin encounters.



Western Hemisphere. The feature attractions include the mix of tropics and a variety of historically significant shipwrecks in relatively shallow depths that allow generous bottom times.

The 600-mile-long stretch of islands that comprise the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos are bathed by the warm waters of the Atlantic Ocean and begin only a hop, skip and a jump from southern Florida. Topside ambiance ranges from casinos, bars and nightclubs to a serene step back in time that offers isolation and complete relaxation. Divers can choose

islands, or island clusters, that run in a southeasterly direction from Walker's Cay in the northwest to Great Inagua in the southeast. Destinations such as Bimini, Grand Bahama, Eleuthera, New Providence, San Salvador and Rum Cay have been part of the region's diving lore and allure for

years. Divers have it all from easy, shallow dives in colorful reef communities to caves, blue holes, sheer drops and shipwrecks to awesome animal encounters. The Bahamas is world renowned for shark diving, with famous feeding dives at Grand Bahama, Walkers Cay and New Providence. And dive operators offer interactions with both wild and tame dolphins.

Step into the time machine in your mind and hit the reverse button before visiting the Turks and Caicos, where life moves at a pace often associated with the kinder, gentler ways of out-of-the-way places. Diving is easily accessible from shore-based operations in Providenciales, West Caicos, South Caicos and Grand Turk, while a live-aboard experience is readily available for those who prefer a more intense week of diving. Spur and groove formations lead to walls where

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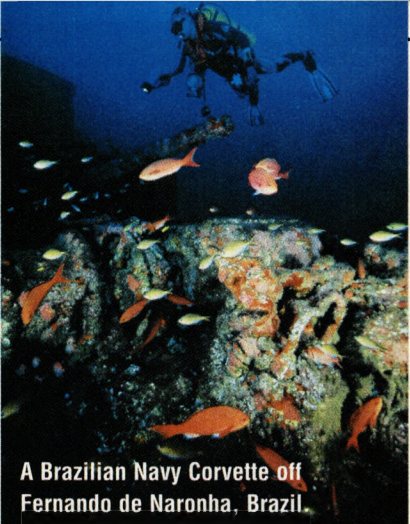
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A Brazilian Navy Corvette off Fernando de Noronha, Brazil.

The Tropical Atlantic

Spotted Eagle Rays, schooling jacks and sharks cruise by on patrol. Undersea pinacles and swim-throughs are outlined by colorful sea fans and sponges.

Much farther to the south, but still in the Atlantic and worthy of a mention, is Brazil's Fernando de Noronha. Just off of South America's eastern tip, this archipelago offers adventure seekers everything from deep tek wrecks to creature-filled tide pools. It is also home to the world's largest population of Spinner Dolphins. 

BAHAMAS

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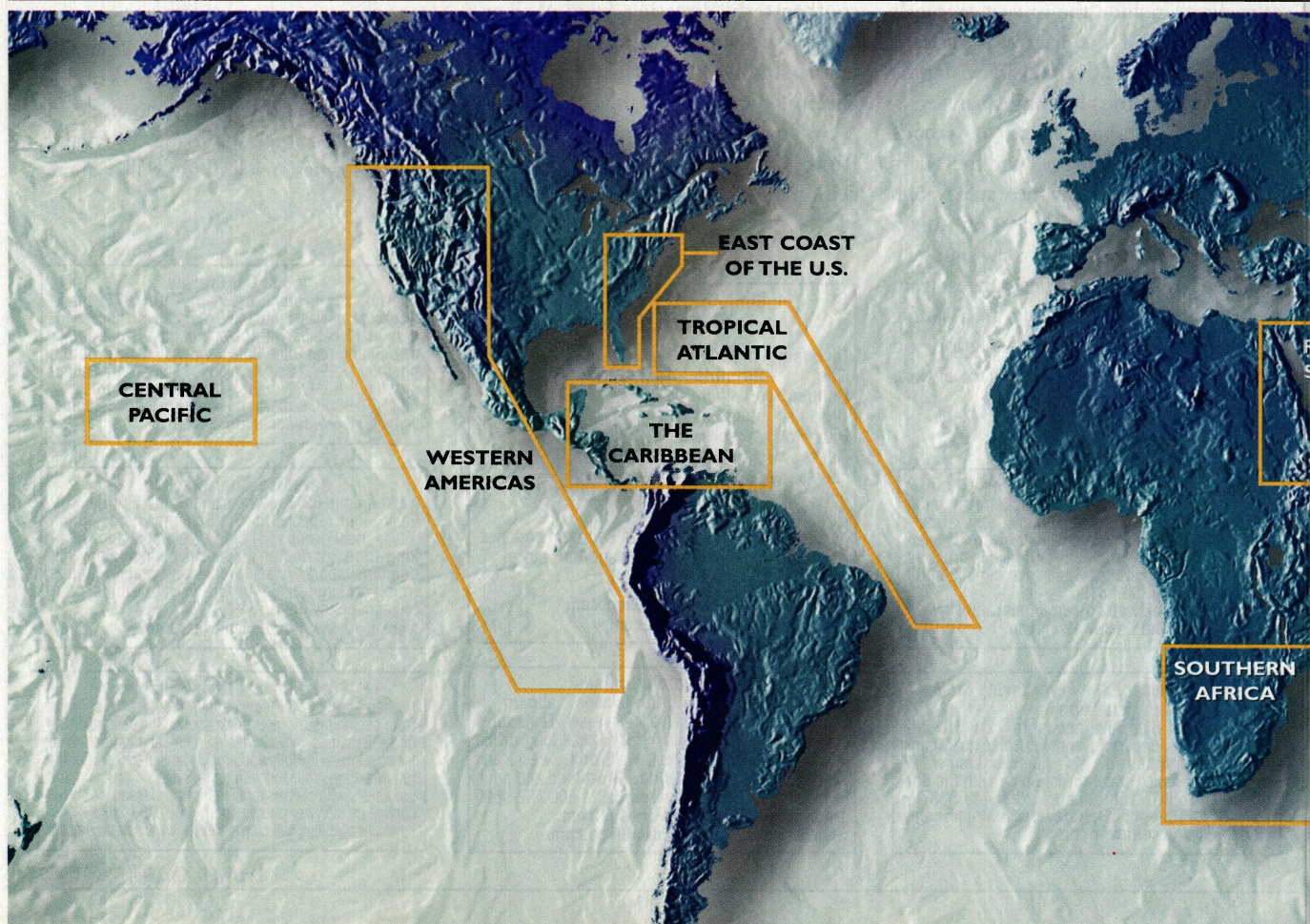
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The Central Caribbean

Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, the Cayman Islands

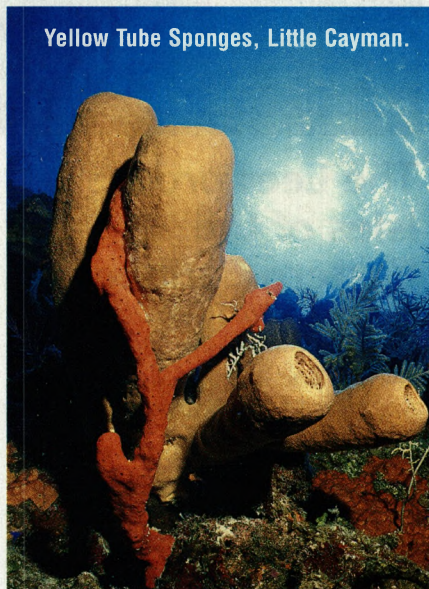
The large land masses of Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola and Puerto Rico comprise an area known as the Greater Antilles. Add in the three Cayman Islands: Grand Cayman, Little Cayman and Cayman Brac, and you have a Caribbean dive paradise.

Cuba is quickly becoming a bigger attraction for traveling divers despite the cloud of world politics that still hovers overhead. Those that have visited Cuban waters, especially along the southern coast, rave about big fish, pelagics and beautiful reefs.

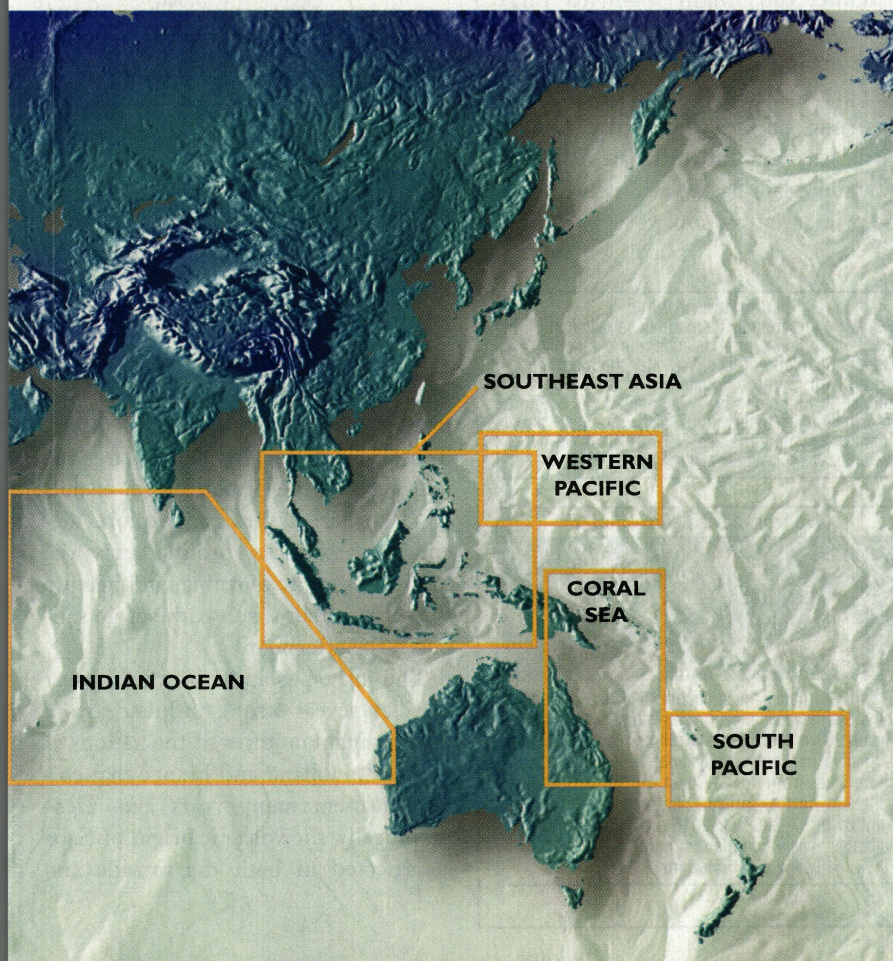
The home of Montego Bay, reggae music and stunning topside landscapes, Jamaica also provides diving along colorful mini walls where fish life and invertebrates flourish. Though not dived as heavily as other areas, the waters off Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico also offer excellent underwater fare. Humpback Whales migrate to the Silver Banks near the Dominican Republic every winter and spring to calve and mate. A live-aboard trip to the shallow bank provides

snorkelers opportunities to observe these behemoths on the surface.

It is the quality of the underwater attractions that has been drawing divers to



Yellow Tube Sponges, Little Cayman.



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The Central Caribbean

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colorful coral walls, canyons, caves and drop-offs buzz with activity. The wonders of Bloody Bay Wall and life in the sand at Jackson Bight are among the highlights of Little Cayman. Cayman Brac is legendary for its great shallow dives, colorful schools of snappers and grunts, walls and the wreck of a Russian frigate.

While you might want to relax around the pool after a morning dive, there are plenty of watersport activities, great restaurants and nightlife to also enjoy on Grand Cayman. Life on Little Cayman and Cayman Brac is a little more laid back, with nature being the primary attraction. 🐟

CAYMAN

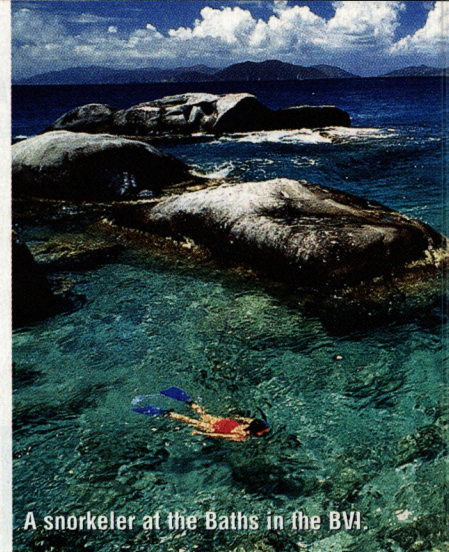
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A snorkeler at the Baths in the BVI.

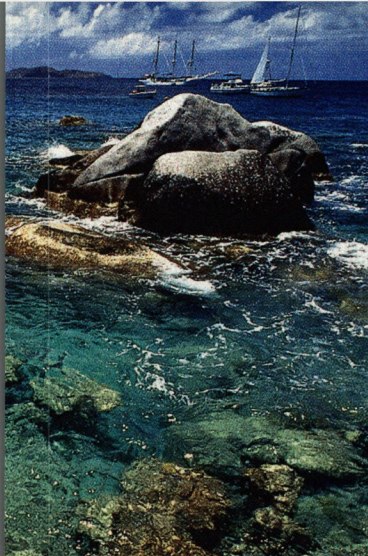
The Leeward Isles of the Eastern Caribbean

USVI, BVI, Saba, St. Eustatius, Anguilla, Antigua, Barbuda, St. Kitts, Nevis, Montserrat, St. Martin, St. Maarten, St. Barthelemy, Guadeloupe

A small group of islands known as the Lesser Antilles encloses the eastern end of the Caribbean Sea, swinging in a downward arc from Puerto Rico to Guadeloupe Island to the north of Venezuela. This group includes the U.S. Virgin Islands on the north end, the British Virgin Islands, Saba, St. Eustatius, Anguilla, Antigua, Barbuda, St. Kitts, Nevis, Montserrat, St. Martin, St. Maarten, St. Barthelemy and Guadeloupe at the southern extreme.

The main islands in the USVI are St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix. Collectively, they provide a delightful variety of colorful reefs, caves, walls, pinnacles, canyons, wrecks and even a pier where seahorses can be found. Tortola and Virgin Gorda are the mainstays of the British Virgin Islands (BVI), where divers can explore legendary shipwrecks, prolific reefs and mini walls in the morning, and hike up scenic mountains, sun bathe or go sailing in the afternoon.

The other islands in the Lesser Antilles reveal strong influence from the dominant cultures of the nations of England, Holland and France that colonized them many years ago. Geographically, the volcanic origin of Saba is reflected in both the topside and



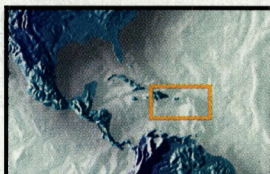
underwater terrain where colorful reefs and rock formations slide away into iridescent blue water. Not far away, St. Eustatius (also known as Statia) serves up a series of wide, flat reefs and a variety of historic shipwrecks.

The waters off Anguilla boast of a number of well placed shipwrecks that have been transformed

into artificial reefs as well as natural coral reef systems. Antigua and Barbados are blessed with healthy coral gardens, walls and wrecks, and there is a flourishing marine park in Antigua. The lush green volcanic mountains of St. Kitts and Nevis command the dominate topside, while black corals, numerous swim-throughs and healthy fish populations are highlights of the diving.

The marine park and a combination of healthy reefs, plentiful fish and frequent

turtle sightings attract divers to St. Barthelemy (St. Barts). The reef off Petit Ilet is the main drawing card in Guadeloupe, while those who spend their time topside can enjoy a number of hot water springs.



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The Windward Isles of the Eastern Caribbean

Dominica, Martinique, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados, Trinidad, Tobago

The southern portion of the Lesser Antilles from Dominica to Trinidad and Tobago comprises a region that is also known as the Windward Islands. Unlike the low lying islands, atolls and mangroves in much of the northern and southern Caribbean, rugged volcanic mountains and cliffs covered with thick, green vegetation are the central features here.

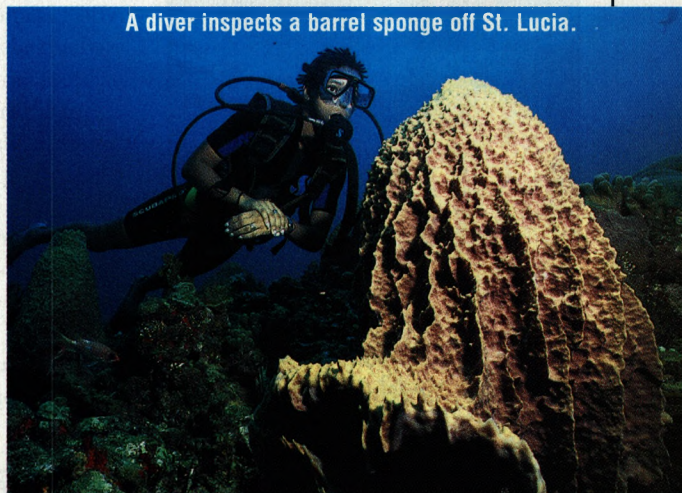
Surrounded by deep water, Dominica is internationally known for frequent sightings of billfish,

Humpback Whales, Sperm Whales and other big pelagic species. To the south, Martinique is noted for its healthy fish populations, which include schools of curious Atlantic Spadefish that cruise around numerous walls and pinnacles. St. Lucia is known for its open ocean seamounts where pelagics often gather, but she also offers wreck dives and abundant marine life in healthy reef communities.

Drift diving is a specialty off the rugged shores of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, which are also popular among photographers seeking little critters. And wrecks, reefs with healthy hard corals, swaying sea fans and Nurse Sharks draw divers to Grenada, while drift diving is the feature that distinguishes the diving at the nearby isle of Carriacou.

Influenced more by the Atlantic than the Caribbean, Barbados has vibrant

A diver inspects a barrel sponge off St. Lucia.

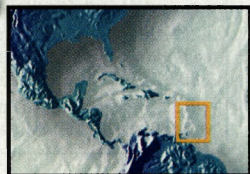
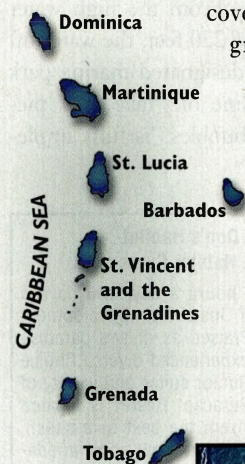


sponges and impressive coral formations. Several wrecks and frequent turtle encounters added to the varied fish

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The Windward Isles of the Eastern Caribbean

populations guarantees plenty of action for photographers. The islands of Trinidad and Tobago comprise a two-island nation whose underwater world is known for drift dives and sheer pinnacles, where jacks and big pelagics are often sighted. 🐟

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ST. LUCIA

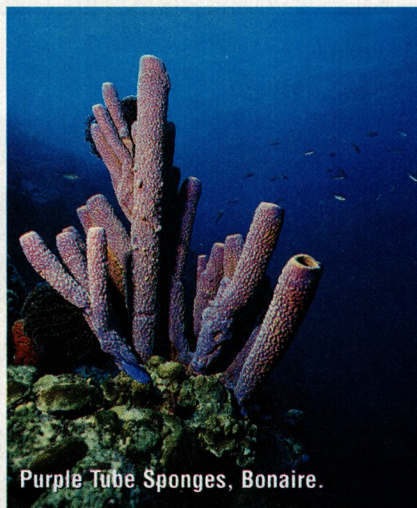
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The Southern Caribbean

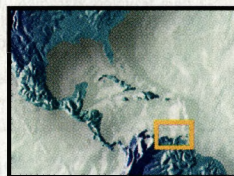
Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao



Purple Tube Sponges, Bonaire.

The southern extreme of the Caribbean includes the heavily Dutch-influenced isles of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao. Collectively known as the ABC Islands, they are part of the Netherlands Antilles, a group that also includes some of the Leeward Islands.

Aruba, the westernmost of the three major islands in the ABCs, offers a number of interesting wrecks to explore in water that is shallow enough to enjoy long bottom times. The wrecks include freighters that were sent to earlier-than-anticipated graves by torpedos during World War II, a tugboat and some airplanes. Impressive stands of brain coral, elkhorn coral, sheet corals, colorful



sponges and gently swaying sea fans provide excellent subject matter for photographers.

Bonaire has long been ahead of the conservation curve and their efforts have paid off in a big way, as fish life flourishes in the waters off the island and off nearby Klein Bonaire. From the high water mark to a depth of 220 feet, the water off both islands is a designated marine park where the guideline of "take only pictures, leave only bubbles" is fully imple-

BONAIRE

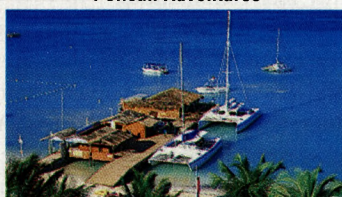
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BONAIRE

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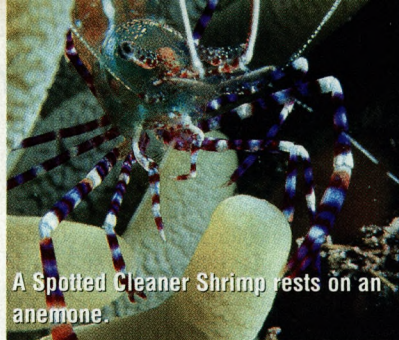
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The Southern Caribbean

mented. Bright Orange Elephant Ear Sponges, Black Coral Trees and impressive coral formations combine to create stunning seascapes, but it is the world of macro critters and fish along with a number of top quality, easily accessible beach dives located all along Bonaire that are the feature attractions for many visitors.

The diving in Curacao rivals that of her sister islands. Over the years, there has been less diving pressure on reefs in Curacao and that translates into more virgin territory to explore. Great shore dives with gentle slopes leading to walls, shipwrecks and loads of marine life are the main drawing cards. 🐟



A Spotted Cleaner Shrimp rests on an anemone.



Snorkeler explores the shallows off Caleta Chacalal, Riviera Maya.

The Western Caribbean and Central America

Mujeres, Contoy, Cancun, Cozumel, Chinchorro Banks, Belize, Honduras

The waters off the eastern coasts of Mexico and Central America are accessible to divers through numerous land-based and live-aboard operations, and side trips to ancient Mayan ruins and wildlife parks are well worth taking before or after your diving adventure.

The vacation wonderland known as Mexico's Mayan Riviera lies at the tip of the Yucatan Peninsula. Marvelous diving awaits those who visit Isla Mujeres, Isla Contoy, the mainland resort town of Cancun and the world famous island of Cozumel. Party hardy or relax and regroup—the choice is yours. The island of Cozumel is well known for exhilarating drift dives. Featured attractions include undersea pinnacles, sheer drops, colorful sponges, sea fans, turtles and a mixture of fishes that include Jewfish, barracudas, Nurse Sharks and countless small, colorful reef species. Freshwater cenotes inspire those seeking technical diving adventures, and many divers visit the mainland to experience some of the world's largest and most ornate underwater caverns and caves. And, diving slightly further south on the Chinchorro Banks, numerous sites on

both the inside and outside of the barrier reef provide big animal action.

In terms of physical size, the Central American nation of Belize is only a small country, but she packs a huge punch in the diving world. Belize has it all from relaxing shore dives to sheer walls and encounters with Manta Rays, turtles, and sharks. Wonderful diving awaits off the shores of Ambergris Caye, Lighthouse Reef, Glover's Reef and along the mangroves and islands that comprise the Turneffe Barrier Reef, the world's second largest barrier reef. Adorned by massive stalactites and surrounded by numerous shallow reefs, the Blue Hole is part of the allure of visiting the Lighthouse Reef area, while marine reserves at Ambergris Caye and Glover's Reef ensure healthy areas to explore.

The barrier reef system that begins in the waters of the Yucatan extends all the way into Bay Islands of Honduras. Great diving abounds near the Bay Islands of Utila, Roatan, Barbaretta, Guanaja and the Cayos Cochinos. Roatan is the largest and

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Posada del Sol, Guanaja

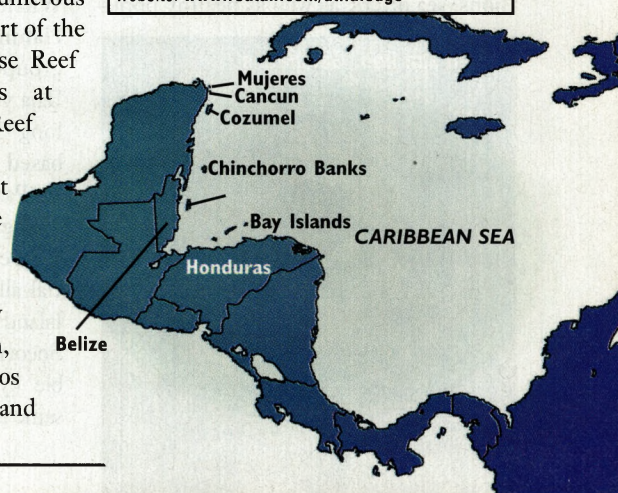
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The Western Caribbean and Central America

most widely known of the Bay Islands, and as might be expected from her worldwide repute, the variety of dive sites includes colorful shallow reefs, fissure-laced walls, ledges and overhangs that are the home to a stunning variety of marine life. 🐠

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The Western Americas

British Columbia, Western U.S., Baja, Socorro, Cocos, Galapagos

Diving the cool waters off the northern sector of the western Americas is done mostly off of Vancouver Island, Canada and Washington's San Juan Islands. Here, rocky reefs and kelp forests are home to giant octopi, wolf eels and a stunning mix of colorful invertebrates.

Exploring Central California near Monterey and Point Lobos offers the opportunity to see the antics of seals, sea lions, sea otters, as well as healthy popu-

lations of fishes and invertebrates. Slightly further south, the eight California Channel Islands are known for giant kelp forests that serve up encounters with Bat Rays, sea lions, harbor seals, more than 60 species of rock-fishes and the bright orange damselfish known as the Garibaldi.

Mexico's Sea of Cortez remains one of the most prolific bodies of water on earth. Divers know it as a place for Whale Sharks, schools of Scalloped Hammer-heads, Manta Rays, big groupers and dense schools of jacks. In Baja you can enjoy the option of a week-long live-aboard vacation or a land-based stay near the Bay of Los Angeles, La Paz or in the Los Cabos.

High voltage diving with Humpback Whales, Manta Rays and sharks is the special allure of a trip to the Revillagigedo Islands, which are popularly known as the Socorro. These islands are only accessible by a live-aboard charter boat. The same is true of the trips to the adrenaline-



A bull sea lion, Galapagos.



producing

Costa Rican island of Cocos, where currents bring in pelagics like Whale Sharks, Scalloped Hammerheads and billfish.

The enchanted isles of the Galapagos, where Charles Darwin made so many of his observations, are only a few hundred miles further south. Most trips to this volcanic island archipelago involve a combination of diving and land-based excursions. Underwater, the Galapagos is inhabited by a mix of temperate, subtropical and tropical species while hikes ashore provide an opportunity to observe the world's only seagoing lizard, the marine iguana, and a variety of birds. 🐡

Hawaii, known for endemic species, mantas, turtles and great fish life, also boasts its share of wrecks.



Central Pacific

Hawaii, Midway

Stunning fish life, Humpback Whales breaching in the distance, dolphins, lush rainforests, flowers in bloom, romantic resorts, and rainbows over waterfalls are images that come to mind when the topic is a Hawaiian vacation. Hawaii offers a perfect blend of an exotic vacation getaway and hassle-free familiarity.

The chain of Hawaiian islands extends for more than 1,000 miles from the big island of Hawaii in the southeast to Kauai and Niihau in the northwest, with Oahu, Molokai, Lanai and Maui in between. This vast expanse of water is legendary for its clarity, brilliantly colored fishes, cathedral like caves and lava chambers and big animal encounters. "Must see" hotspots include the Cathedrals off Lanai, lava formations aglow with shimmering shafts of sunlight, and Molokini Crater, a site well known for its black coral trees and resident reef sharks. The wreck of the 165-foot-long *Mahi* is a favorite dive off Oahu, and few dives anywhere in the world are as rewarding as night diving with feeding Manta Rays in the waters off Kona, on the Big Island of Hawaii.



The

Midway

Islands, 1,200 miles northeast of the northern extreme of the Hawaiian chain are well known to history buffs for intense air and sea battles between U.S. and Japanese forces during World War II. The remnants of those battles have become a diver's playground. Add in coral atolls, lagoons and barrier reefs that teem with captivating invertebrates, rare Monk Seals, tropical fishes and encounters with a variety of reef sharks, and you have an idyllic setting for adventurous divers. 🐟

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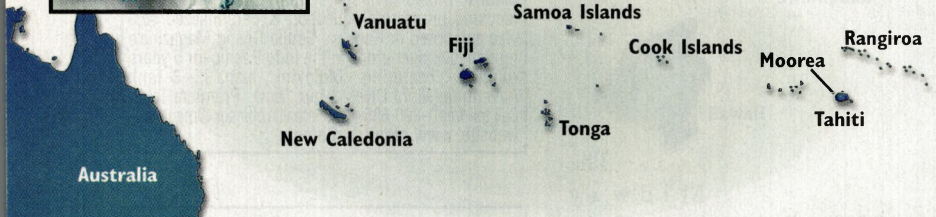
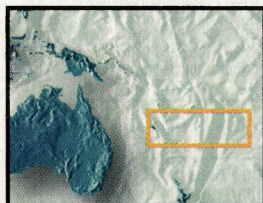
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South Pacific

Tahiti, Tonga, Fiji, New Caledonia, Vanuatu

Romance, adventure and fantastic diving describe the vast expanse of the South Pacific, a region that includes Polynesia and Melanesia. Polynesia is comprised of Tahiti and Tonga while Melanesia includes Fiji, New Caledonia and Vanuatu. Throughout the South Pacific, the topside terrain ranges from idyllic remote atolls that barely break the surface of azure seas to chains of large, mountainous isles covered by rainforests.

The icing on this cake is that the South Pacific is home to many of the friendliest cultures on Earth. Almost everywhere you go, people are eager to share their traditions, which range from firewalking over hot coals to drinking kava with their guests to spontaneous choirs that bid visitors long-remembered farewells upon departure. Living accommodations vary from live-aboards to small resorts that provide guests with isolated thatched huts.

Tahitian diving is highlighted by colorful reefs and current-



The prolific reefs of the South Pacific are home to many elaborately camouflaged species, such as this scorpionfish.

ripped cuts filled with big-animal action. Moorea and Raingoroa are well known for hosting frenzied shark dives with Blacktip Reef and Gray Reef Sharks. In wintertime Tonga is famous for visits by Humpback Whales.

Variety and color are the hallmarks of Fijian waters. Known as the "soft coral capital of the world," Fiji has it all, from the coral bommies that are home to Blue-Ribbon Eels and Leaf Scorpionfish to nudibranchs, crinoids and anemonefish. There are also sheer walls and encounters with pelagics in the Somo Somo Straits and Astrolabe Reef. Deep drop-offs with walls adorned by rainbow colored soft corals and sea fans along with towering coral heads that almost reach the surface compose the diving at Matangi and Namena.

The 645-foot-long *President Coolidge*, a once proud passenger liner turned troop carrier and now one of the largest shipwrecks in the world, is a feature attraction of diving in Vanuatu. 🐟

Western Pacific

Truk Lagoon, Palau, Guam, Yap, Marshall Islands, Pohnpei, Saipan, Tinian, Kosrae, Philippines

When divers think of the tropical Pacific, Micronesia is usually what comes to mind. Consisting of more than 2,000 islands located east of the Philippines, north of Indonesia and west of Hawaii, it encompasses an area of more than 4.5 million square miles. Truk Lagoon, Palau, Guam, Yap, the Marshall Islands featuring Bikini Atoll and Majuro Atoll, Pohnpei, Saipan, Tinian and Kosrae are some of the diving hotspots. Micronesian diving is known for war wrecks, the explosion of species that inhabit the color-filled reefs, vertical walls, action-packed current cuts, protected lagoons and seamounts.

Truk (Chuuk) Lagoon is the Mecca of

wreck diving. In two days of heavy fighting in February of 1944, Allied Forces sunk more than 60 Japanese ships tankers, freighters and submarines. For history buffs, the wrecks remain moments frozen in time, and for wildlife aficionados, the wrecks have been transformed into colorful artificial reefs.

The azure waters and mushroom-shaped rock islands of Palau (Belau) create an irresistible setting. Diving highlights include wreck exploration, expansive caves, sheer walls and drift diving through current cuts where sharks, dense schools of barracudas, tunas and other



Mast of the *Fujikawa Maru*, Truk Lagoon.

pelagics gather. The famed Blue Corner is not to be missed.

Yap is known worldwide as the land of stone money, where bare-breasted ladies and men in loincloths greet their

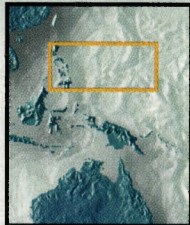


guests and maintain their traditional lifestyles. Experienced dive travelers know Yap for encounters with big Manta Rays.

Pohnpei and Kosrae make up a quintessential Pacific dream world. Divers can experience incredibly rich reefs and diverse fish populations all while enjoying an authentic and warm local culture.

In recent years the waters of Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands have become a big draw due to the only-recently-made-available opportunity to dive the *USS Saratoga*, the world's only wrecked aircraft carrier accessible to divers. And, a U.S. territory, Guam has more modern amenities than many traditional Micronesian areas while providing visiting divers with some great World War II wrecks, vertical walls and pinnacles.

The Philippines has one of the most



productive underwater ecosystems in the world, supporting more than 800 coral species. A variety of filter feeders such as crinoids, sponges and tunicates flourish in these current-stirred waters as do fusiliers, jacks and batfish.

Batangas Island, in the north near Manila, is well known for its diversity of invertebrates, and Apo Reef has long been enjoyed for its big animal encounters. To the south in the Sulu Sea, Tubbataha Reefs are the mainstay of a protected marine park. Seasonal access via a live-aboard is the only way to visit this prolific area. There is also great reef diving around the islands of Negros, Cebu and Bohol to the northeast of Tubbataha.

Truk, Palau & Yap

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The Coral Sea

Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Great Barrier Reef

To historians, the mention of the Coral Sea conjures up images of the numerous, horrific battles of World War II. To marine biologists, the Coral Sea is synonymous with the concept of bio-diversity, and to traveling scuba divers, the region is everything one

A Napoleon Wrasse cruises by a diver at Cod Hole, on the Great Barrier Reef.



could hope for. There are primitive cultures, stunning landscapes and unlimited underwater exploration in the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and on Australia's Great Barrier Reef, which borders the western edge of the Coral Sea.

The dive sites associated with the 992 islands that make up the Solomon Islands can be explored via live-aboard or from shore-based resorts in Munda and Gizo. Color abounds, as soft corals, sea fans and crinoids galore adorn almost every reef. Face the walls to discover everything from inch-long rainbow colored nudibranchs to endemic tropical fishes. Look up, and you can see a Gray Reef Shark or Silvertip cruising nearby. Turn away and face the blue, and you enjoy a parade of pelagics.

If you want primitive, wild and pristine, dive Papua New Guinea. A trip to the highlands in the nation's interior is a look back in time at extraordinary cultures and traditional ways of life. Neptune's realm offers the world of bizarre creatures: muck diving in

PALAU

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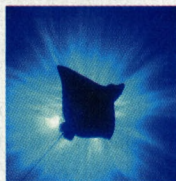


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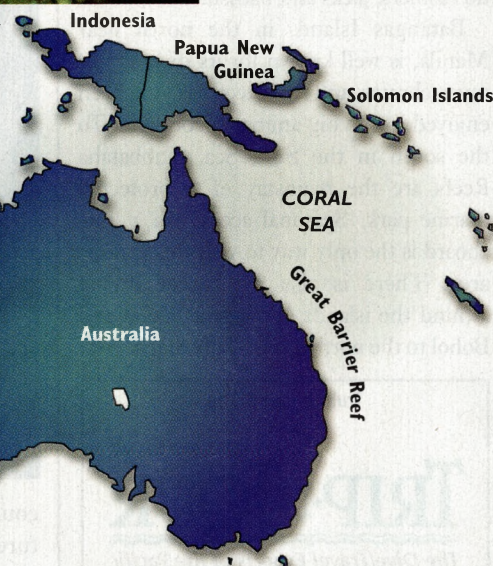
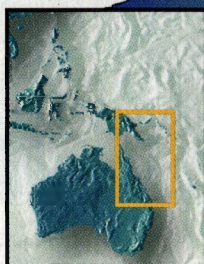
The Coral Sea



A Ragged-Finned Firefish, one of the varieties of lionfish found in the Coral Sea.

Milne Bay off the island of New Britain, high voltage encounters with Silvertip Sharks at Kavieng, and exquisite reefs in Madaang, at Walindi, Hoskins and Raboul.

Stretching 1,250 miles long and as many as 150 miles wide in some places, and so large that it can be seen from space, Australia's



Great Barrier Reef is home to more than 2,000 species of fishes and 4,000 types of invertebrates. From shallow reefs to sheer walls, from Manta Rays, turtles and sharks to Cod Hole at Ribbon Reef number 10 to the variety of Heron Island, the Great Barrier Reef offers color, adventure, beauty and intrigue.



A diver and turtle, Sipidan.

Southeast Asia

Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand

Think of lush green mountainsides, palm trees and isolated beaches with sugar white sands and not another soul in sight. Think exotic and affordable. Now throw in a few thoughts about the most bizarre macro creatures imaginable, diving on an active volcano, swirling schools of tropical fishes and some adrenaline pumping encounters with pelagics, and what you have is Southeast Asian diving.

Indonesia, the largest archipelagic nation in the world, with some 13,675 islands. Of these, roughly 6,000 are named, and only 1,000 are inhabited. Perhaps the most widely known isle is that of Bali, a land famous for its volcanic landscapes, luxuriant rainforests, gentle people and traditional culture. Bali is also a perfect choice for macro photographers who want to create images in rich flourishing coral gardens.

While many destinations in Indonesia can be enjoyed from land-based resorts, a live-aboard is also a good choice. Regardless, Sulawesi's Lembeh Straits should not be missed. There you can enjoy the thrills of muck diving while searching for a Mimic Octopus, seahorses, Leaf Scorpionfish, frogfish, Snake Eels and more.

The waters off the islands of Sangalaki, Derawan and Kakaban to the east of Borneo provide excellent odds for swimming eyeball to eyeball with turtles, sharks, and Manta Rays. The shallow reefs nearby are well known for numerous cleaning stations.

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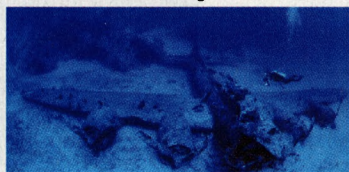
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rounding the islands east of Bali including Lombok and Komodo take on a more Australian flavor in terms of flora and fauna, as is the case with Wakatobi to the northeast of Komodo.

In the last decade or so, increasing numbers of vacationing divers have begun to explore the Malaysian waters of Southeast Asia, including Sipadan, Mabul, Labuan, Layang Layang and the Malay Peninsula.

The tiny, oceanic isle of Sipadan to the east of Borneo is probably the best known of Malaysia's diving gems. It's been made famous by its resident turtle populations,

ly accessible depths, the wreck of the *Tun Huang* is a featured dive.

North of Borneo, the atoll of Layang Layang supplies a mix of easy, shallow lagoon dives, exploration along sheer walls adorned by enormous sea fans, current cuts and drift dives. Encounters



Thailand's beautiful Andaman Sea.



colorful fishes and excellent beach dives.

Nearby, Mabul Island, home of a wonderful variety of nudibranchs and other intriguing invertebrates, rises from the continental shelf below. Labuan is known to divers as the shipwreck capital of Malaysia. Battered wrecks from World War II, along with a number of modern wrecks that are more intact, provide a lot of variety. Upright in easi-

with dense schools of barracudas, jacks, Manta Rays and schooling Hammerhead Sharks in provide superb photo opps.

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Marine parks in the waters surrounding the rich archipelago of Pulau Redang and Tioman Island flourish with healthy coral gardens inhabited by numerous tropical species.

Thailand's Andaman Sea, especially around Similan and Surin Islands, is known worldwide for pristine reefs with healthy populations of fish species and myriad invertebrates. Prolonged encounters with Whale Sharks and many of their cartilaginous cousins, especially Leopard Sharks and Shovel-nose Rays, are common at Richelieu Rock. A thrilling Nurse and Silvertip Shark dive is also found at distant Burma Banks.

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The Indian Ocean

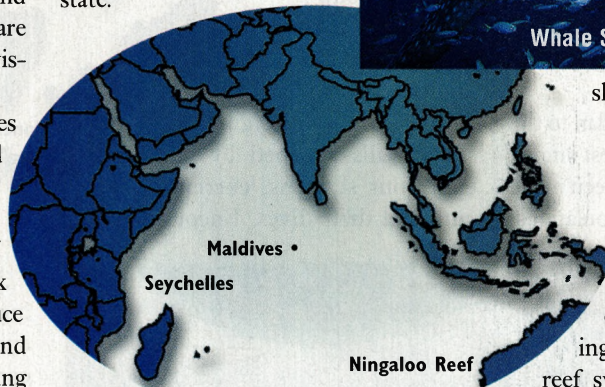
Seychelles, Maldives and Ningaloo Reef

The Indian Ocean is less well known to the general diving public than some other destinations, but don't let a lack of publicity fool you. The Seychelles, Maldives and Ningaloo Reef off Western Australia are several of the sites that are commonly visited by divers.

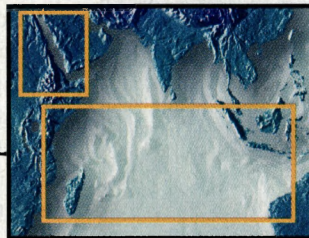
Off of eastern Africa, the Seychelles are a group of lush volcanic islands and coral atolls in the Indian Ocean to the northeast of Madagascar. Impressive reef formations, enormous schools of fishes, a number of excellent wreck dives and offshore sites that often produce encounters with giant stingrays and Whale Sharks are the major drawing cards. Far to the west, the famed atoll of Aldabra is considered one of the world's most treasured diving locations.

Extending across the equator in the middle of the Indian Ocean to the southwest of Sri Lanka, the 26 coral atolls, white sandy beaches and palm-fringed islands collectively known as the Maldives

await. This topside paradise is highly acclaimed as a diver's haven. Strict local regulation of fishing and commercial exploitation has kept the marine environment in a near-pristine state.



Diving is done in and around the atolls and channels they form. Currents that run through the channels bring in big animals, such as mantas, to feed. Outside the atolls are



waters support more than 100 species of coral

and in excess of 1,000 species of fishes. Huge sea fans and vibrant soft corals adorn vertical walls. Encounters with schools of jacks, majestic Manta Rays, Napoleon Wrasse, large groupers, tunas, Oceanic Whitetip Sharks and a variety of reef sharks provide some world class excitement. Ever present lionfishes, angelfishes, butterflyfishes, tangs, anemone fishes and color splashed groupers along with untold numbers of invertebrates give macro photographers plenty of first class subject matter.

Featuring the national park of Ras Muhammed, just south of Sharm el Sheikh and Naama Bay, most of the diving in the Sinai is enjoyed on the walls bordering the east coast of this world-famous peninsula. Many other excellent sites are accessible from land from the city of Hurgada, however, live-aboards provide the best access to more remote locations and the most thrilling dives in the Straits of Tiran and at The Brothers. 🐟



Whale Shark, Ningaloo Reef, Australia.

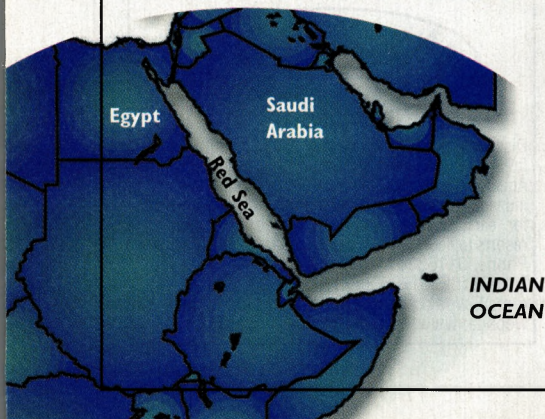
sloping reefs where sharks, turtles, Eagle Rays and Manta Rays cruise over healthy and vibrant corals.

The northern sector of the West Cape of Australia is fringed by the Ningaloo Reef, one of the world's largest fringing reef systems. The intricate reef system stretches over 160 miles and, at some points, is only a few yards from the beach. The Ningaloo Reef system is home to myriad life forms, including common sightings of the largest fish in the world, the Whale Shark. Up to 50 feet in length, though most are considerably shorter, these leviathans are regular visitors in the Ningaloo area from March through May. Add the bio-diversity of 250 plus species of corals and more than 450 different types of fishes, and it makes the Exmouth area an impressive diving destination all year round. 🐟

The Red Sea

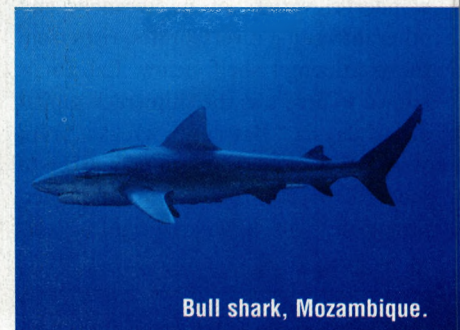
Years ago, the father of scuba diving, Jacques Cousteau, proclaimed the Red Sea to be a "corridor of marvels." Bordering the harshness of the vast Egyptian desert, the richness of the Red Sea stands out in marked contrast as the

Masked and Pennant Butterflyfish, Red Sea.



Southern Africa

South Africa, Mozambique



Bull shark, Mozambique.

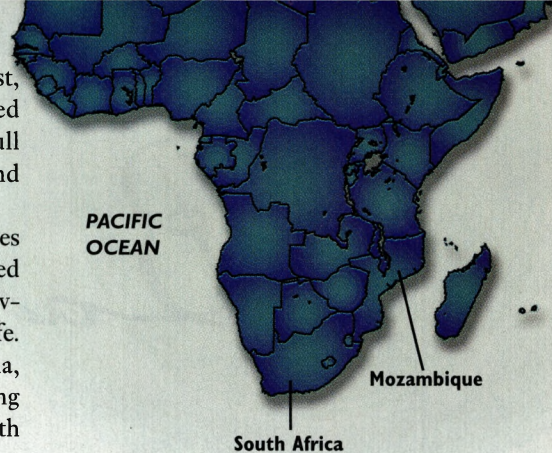
The first thought that enters the minds of most people who consider a vacation to South Africa is of big animals. While it is certainly possible to go only to dive, most visitors enjoy a combination of diving and topside safari. The feature attractions of the underwater world are adrenaline pumping Great White Shark expeditions in Shark Alley between Dyer Island and Geyser Rock. This area is home to an

estimated 60,000 Cape Fur Seals, a natural food source for Great Whites.

Protea Banks and Aliwal Shoals, near Durban, provide some great dives where aptly named dive sites provide insight into what to expect. Popular sites include Amphitheatre, Cathedral, Shark Gully, Lionfish Hole and Lace Reef. Throughout the area there is an abundance of hard and soft coral, sponges and 1,200 plus fish species, but the greatest attraction is the variety of commonly seen sharks. Thick concen-

trations of Ragged Teeth top the list, but other frequently encountered species include Copper, Bull (Zambezi), Hammerhead, Tiger and Whale Sharks.

To the northeast of South Africa lies Mozambique. The diving is as untamed as the countryside, and adventure travelers will find waters rich with life. Massive shoals of baitfish, tuna, Kingfish, sharks, sailfish and schooling barracuda teem beneath the waves, with Ponto do Oro a favorite location. 🐠



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text & photography by Eric Hanauer

Bathed in



Enya's "Caribbean Blue" kept throbbing through my head as we flew into the British Virgin Islands. The high, mountainous islands were breathtaking, their lush green growth contrasting with turquoise shades of water revealing the reefs below. Houses seemed to be dropped haphazardly on the hillsides, connected by dirt roads snaking down to a perimeter blacktop. Bays and harbors were dotted with sailing ships, many of them catamarans. Sailing is the *raison d'être* for the British Virgin Islands. The sea is like a big lake rimmed by 36 islands, which are so close together it's hard to see where one ends and the other begins. Aside from remote Anegada, all are within a short boat ride of each other.



Civilization

Skin Diver's Guide to the BVI

This is a friendly, laid-back country with one of the highest standards of living in the Caribbean. The population is only 19,000, with three-fourths living on the island of Tortola. Most of the rest are on Virgin Gorda. Offshore banking and tourism drive the economy; the locals own a significant share. No slums or poverty are evident; homes are substantial and well-maintained. It's not a party place, but there are plenty of good restaurants, watering holes and shops. It's civilization without crowds, and nature without hardships.

The majority of visitors come for sailing charters, either bare boat or manned by a local crew. Rendezvous diving is an easy way for them to get their underwater fix. The dive centers will send a boat to meet the sailboat, pick up the divers and take them to the site, and supply guides and gear. There are live-aboard boats for more serious divers, and for those who prefer their vacation land-based, luxurious resorts and hotels are spread throughout the islands, many with dive centers on site.



Concentration and perseverance will yield interesting macro critters, such as this crab.

Divers of all experience levels will find things to do here. Few sites are deeper than 80 feet, with 30 to 60 the norm. There are reefs, sandy areas, wrecks and caverns. Aside from Anegada, which is usually dived only from live-aboards, most BVI sites are easily accessible regardless of where you are based. Because of the proximity of all the islands, boat rides range from 15 to 45 minutes. During my 12 days on the islands, I was able to sample some of the best.

Wreck of the Rhone

Jacqueline Bisset's emergency ascent in a wet T-shirt some 25 years ago firmly established the *Rhone* as the most famous wreck in the Caribbean. Although the plot of *The Deep* was set in Bermuda, the wreck footage was shot on the *Rhone*. It's an

outstanding dive on two levels: as a historic shipwreck and as one of the most vibrant artificial reefs in the region.

Launched in 1865, the Royal Mail Steamship (RMS) *Rhone* was a sleek, 310-foot iron vessel, one of the first driven by a propeller. She was also equipped with two masts and sails in case the newfangled means of propulsion broke down. Caught in a hurricane in 1867, she smashed against the rocks of Salt Island. The boilers exploded violently, tearing the ship in half and killing more than 150 passengers and crew. In the 1950s, the U.S. Navy administered the *coupe de grace*, blasting the stern section because it was a navigation hazard.

The most requested site in the BVI, the *Rhone* is usually done in two dives: the deeper bow section first, then the stern. It's one of the richest marine life habitats in the BVI, especially for schooling fish. Lying on its starboard side, the ghostly bow is dominated by a long, narrow bowsprit. The side is laid open, so divers of all ability levels can go inside, yet see daylight the entire time.

Two sets of broken framework stand vertically like the columns of a Greek temple. In the sand in front of one of them lies a small signal cannon. The highlight of the stern section is the huge propeller, 18 feet across. On the bottom nearby lies a special porthole. According to legend, if you rub it, you will have an exciting romantic encounter before leaving the BVI. Hopeful divers keep it polished so that the golden gleam of brass and glass shine through the marine growth. (Apparently, I didn't rub hard enough.)

Skin Diver GUIDE • British Virgin Islands

GETTING THERE:

There are no direct flights to the BVI from the U.S. or Canada. The easiest way to get there is to fly to San Juan, Puerto Rico, or St. Thomas, U.S.V.I., and continue to your destination via inter-island flights or ferry service from St. Thomas. American Airlines, Delta and US Airways have direct flights from several U.S. destinations to St. Thomas and St. Croix. Most flights from Europe connect via Miami or San Juan before flying on to St. Thomas. There's a U.S. \$10 air tax when leaving the British Virgin Islands.

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS FACTS & TIPS:

Best Time To Visit:

Year-round. The rainy season is September through December; the driest is January through March. Water conditions are calmest April through August. Peak tourist season is December through April. Hurricane season is September and October.

Topside Climate:

Winter 73 to 82°F, summer 79 to 88°F.

Water Temperature:

On average, winter 72°F, summer 86°F.

Exchange Rate:

The U.S. dollar is the official currency of the BVI.

Time Difference:

Eastern Standard Time plus 1 hour. No daylight-saving time.

Live-aboards: Trimarine Boat Company (Cuan Law) (800) 648-339 www.bvidiving.com

Dive Operators: (Tortola) Aquaventure Scuba Services (284) 494 4320 www.aquaventurebvi.com • Baskin In

the Sun (800) 650-2084 www.baskininthesun.com • Blue Water Divers (284) 494-2847 www.ultimatebvi.com/bluewater •

Prospect Reef Resort (800) 356-8937 www.prospectreef.com • Underwater Safaris (800) 537-7032 www.underwatersafaris.com

(Virgin Gorda) Dive BVI (800) 848-7078 www.divebvi.com • Kilbride's Sunchaser Scuba (800) 932-4286 www.come.to/bvi

Resorts: Leverick Bay Resort (800) 848-7081 www.virgingordabvi.com • The Bitter End Yacht Club (800) 872-2392 www.beyc.com

RESOURCES: BVI Tourist Board, Tortola (284) 494-3134 www.bviwelcome.com • Lonely Planet Guide to the BVI, www.lonelyplanet.com • Moon Handbooks, www.moon.com •

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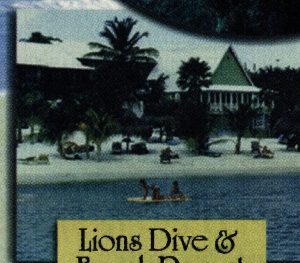
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Angelfish

I was feeling like a blind man. Skimming over the sandy bottom near Angelfish Reef off Norman Island, my dive guide, Katryn Ohlsen, was pointing out tiny critters that I couldn't spot to save my life. What's unusual about that tiny piece of drifting black algae? Wait a minute. That's not algae. It's a Pipehorse, a mini macro version of the Ghost Pipefish from the Indo-Pacific. A couple of inches long and thin as angel hair pasta, with all sorts of frilly fins and



The ghostly bowsprit of the Rhone.



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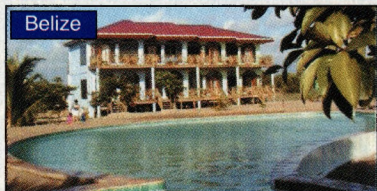
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appendages, it looks like a cross between a pipefish and a seahorse. Wait. There's another. They're writhing around, tails intertwined. Are they mating or what?

Why is she picking up that little rock and setting it down next to a similar rock? There are tiny fishes inside: Sailfin Blennies. What these guys lack in size they make up in aggression, charging out of their holes, mouths open, defending their territory.

What a difference a good dive guide makes. A former high school teacher, Katryn left her native Sweden to find adventure in the British Virgin Islands. Her ability to find tiny macro critters is a local legend. This was my first visit to the BVI and I needed all the help I could get. Some of the most interesting life is hidden, but a little concentration and perseverance is often rewarded by serendipitous finds like a scuttling crab, a pair of grunts facing off in a territorial display, or a lobster hiding in an air pocket on the ceiling of a cavern.

West Pelican

Sometimes the best part of a dive comes after you run out of film. Such was the case when I dived West Pelican Reef, also off Norman Island. After I finished the roll on a beautiful fist-sized crab, the fun began. A trunkfish was blowing sand looking for food. It led me to a sand patch with a colony of Yellowhead Jawfish, suspended vertically over their holes. Then it was back to a rich coral area with more sponges and gorgonians than I'd seen so far. Finally, a small, greedy grouper darted into a crevice, the tail of a blue damselfish sticking out of its mouth. Seeing predation is unusual, photographing it harder yet. This would have been the perfect situa-

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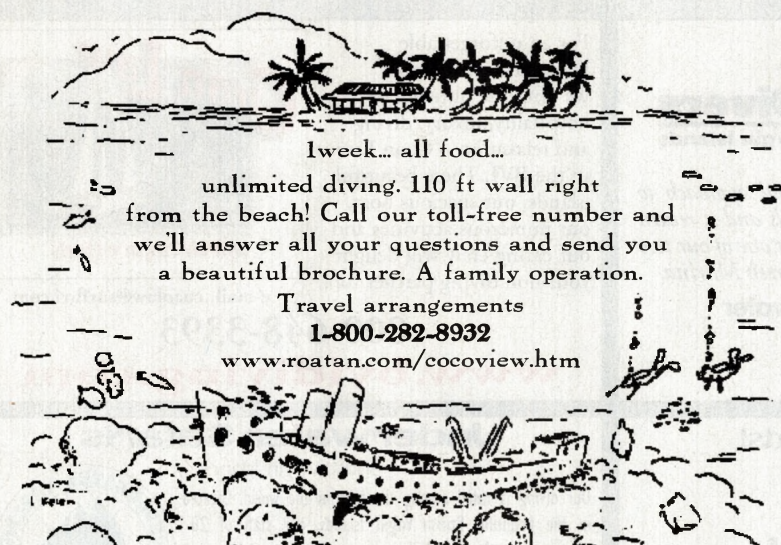
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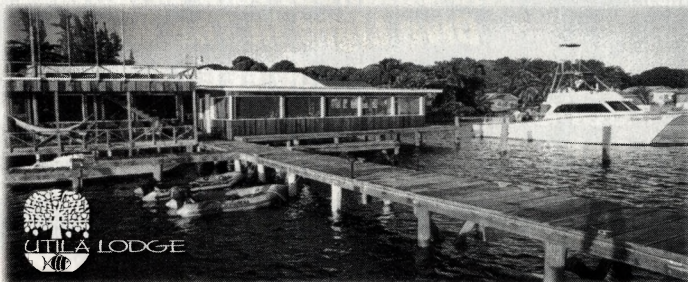
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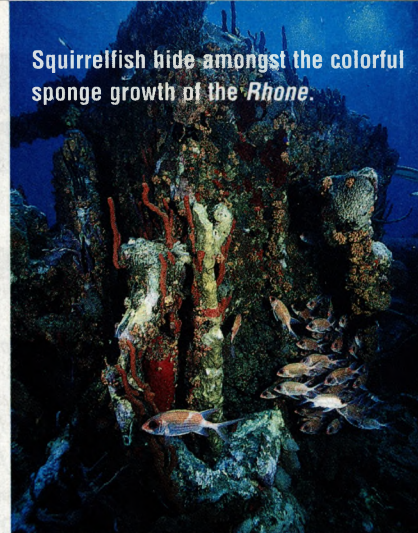
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Squirrelfish hide amongst the colorful sponge growth of the Rhone.



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the Chimney

Off Great Dog Island, the Chimney began as a narrow canyon that became narrower as I continued. It was reminiscent of the sandstone canyon of Petra, in Jordan, made famous in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, but on a smaller, underwater scale. In the middle is a small cavern, its walls covered by a salad bowl of multi-colored sponges, cup corals and invertebrates in hues ranging from oranges and reds to yellows and blues. Two crevices were home to lobsters, crabs, a grouper, Flame Scallops and tiny glassfish. Overhead were several air traps; one of the lobsters was half in and half out of the water. All the while, there was a weird rumbling sound, which turned out to be bubbles moving up and out. At the end of the canyon was a narrow passage to the reef, where I had to push my camera ahead to squeeze through.

the Chikuzen

Although the Rhone gets all the attention, BVI guides consider the Chikuzen a special wreck because of the fish life it attracts. A derelict Japanese fishing boat, it was abandoned and sunk, 5.5 miles north of Great Camanoe Island in 1981. Lying at 80 feet on a sand bottom, it attracts schools of fish and their predators. The stronger the current, the more fish there are. Schools of grunts, jacks and spadefish swarmed around the deck, while barracudas hovered overhead. On the bottom were big stingrays allowing close approaches before scuttling off in an explosion of sand.



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Joe's Cave

Joe's Cave provided a unique experience in a shallow cavern with an overhead skylight. Underneath a sheer cliff on Dead Chest Island, there is a side room at 10 feet. I rode the surge inside, holding on and taking two kicks forward for each push back. Inside the room, I was protected from the surge, but a school of silvery hatchetfish were being tossed back and forth in mid-water. Overhead, the surf was breaking. At that depth, I could feel it in my chest, and had to clear my

ears every time a wave passed above. Instead of shooting photos, I soaked in the experience in the camera of the mind, before riding the surge back out of the cavern.

Dry Diversions

According to photo pro Mauricio Handler, "Once you come out of water, the BVI really kicks in.... Every corner, every day, every bay is a different feel. Those who like the outdoors have a good time here."

Rent a car and drive around Tortola's

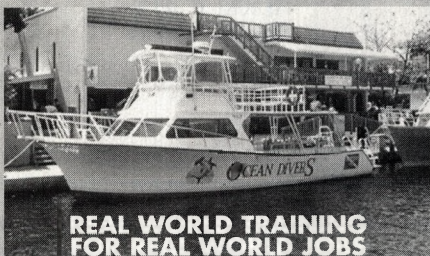
vertical ridge roads, but remember to keep on the left. You can't get lost; there's only one main road around the island. Hike along dirt paths for magnificent views and deserted beaches. On the north side you can surf or just lie on the sand and enjoy the solitude. Set aside a day to sail instead of dive. Depending on your experience level, you can rent a boat yourself, or have somebody do the skippering for you.

The most renowned tourist site is The Baths, a vast area of protected beaches at the southern end of Virgin Gorda that's delineated by hundreds of magnificent, weather-worn boulders. In some places, the boulders mark off tiny bays, ideal for snorkeling, bathing or just sunning on the sand. In others, a

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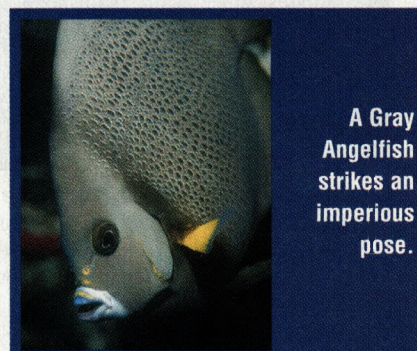
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The British Virgin Islands has been described as a delightful combination of civilization and raw nature. I confirmed that on my birthday. As I climbed back aboard after my third dive, along came the ice cream boat, named *Deliverance*, selling dark chocolate Dove Bars. After all, what's a birthday without ice cream? That's civilized. 🐠

A special thanks to American Airlines, Continental Airlines, Bitter End Yacht Club, Leverick Bay Resort, Prospect Reef Resort, Aquaventure Scuba Services, Baskin in the Sun, Blue Water Divers, Underwater Safaris, Dive BVI and Kilbride's Sunchaser Scuba. Also, thank you to Randy Keil, Katryn Ohlsen, Annie Muirhead, Courtney McKeough, Tanya Kuck, Mauricio Handler, Armando Jenik, Jim Scheiner, Mike Goldberg and Phil Brown.

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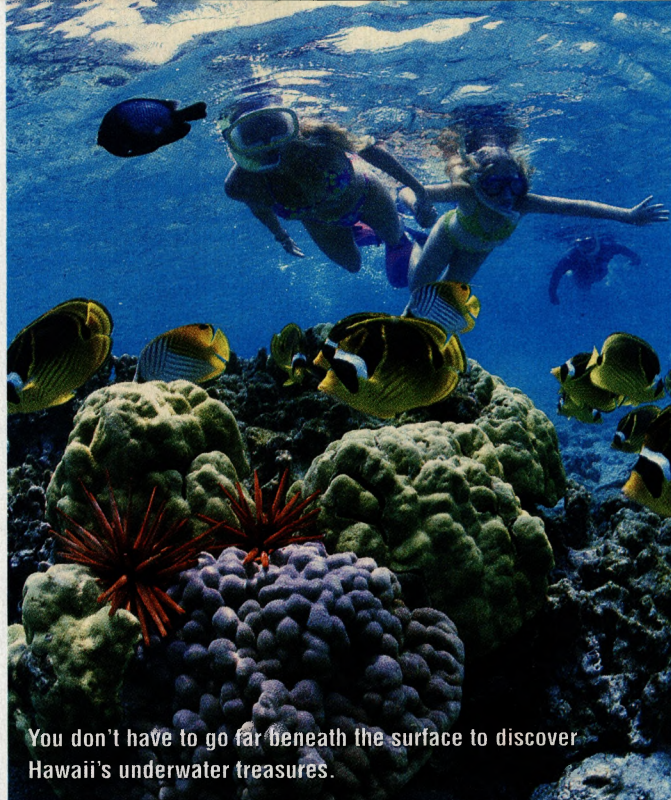
*J*ohn was always the smart one. After straight-As in high school, an Ivy League polish and an acclaimed degree in Economics, my brother took the next logical step. He bolted to Hawaii to become a surfer dude. Our father was, to put it gently, confused by my brother's career path. I, of course, encouraged his non-conformist bent. Hell, I was 18 and had a free place to flop in the land of tanned babes, awesome diving and killer Maui wowwie.

My big break came in 1977. John teamed up with our cousin Clay who was in the Navy on Oahu. They fixed up an old wooden sailboat, the *Lillie Dansker*, for a 3,000-mile journey south to Bora Bora in search of the perfect wave and women who had never seen goofy white men. I was invited for their final shake-down cruise—a leisurely 10-day cruise around Oahu, Lanai, Maui and Molokai. So, we loaded the deck with scuba tanks, strapped surfboards to the gunnels, grabbed the guitar and hoisted the sails.

Hawaii Seven—O



by Fred D. Garth

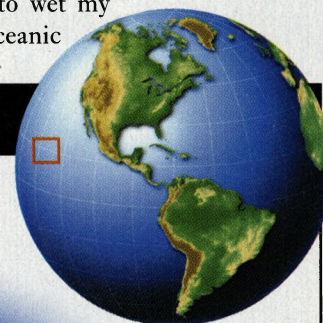


You don't have to go far beneath the surface to discover Hawaii's underwater treasures.

Adding a touch of class to our own little S.S. *Minnow* crew, were two lovely *wahinis*, Rhoda (John's Hawaiian girlfriend), and Becky, a well-endowed, wild-haired bartender from Honolulu by way of San Diego. Along the way, Rhoda played native guide, enriching us with such cultural traditions as showing us how to pop slimy *opehi* (pronounced: Oh-Pee-Hee) mollusks off rocks and eat the raw muscle inside. They did NOT taste just like chicken—more like the offspring of an oyster and a garden slug. Becky was The Entertainer. She performed dirty bar songs while gyrating to the beat. Sure, her act was tasteless, but a lot more appetizing than the *opehi*.

At our first anchorage in Lanai, we ran into hordes of fish: butterflyfish, angelfish, tangs and parrotfish of varying denominations. And no people. Just us and a lobster or two in the pot. For a couple of days we dived the west and south shores, finding gorgeous sites that dive shops from Maui now visit regularly, like the Cathedrals and Hulapoe Bay. Most trips to Lanai these days originate from the tourist haven of Lahaina, a 45-minute plus ride across Auau Channel. Lahaina was in our near future, too, but first we had a date with a crater.

I'd heard legends about the Molokini crater (off Maui's south shore) and was about to wet my pants to dive the dead oceanic



Skin Diver GUIDE • Hawaii

GETTING THERE: Most major airlines service Hawaii, such as American Airlines, Continental Airlines, Hawaiian Airlines and United Airlines. There are a number of direct flights to Oahu, Maui and Hawaii (the Big Island).

FACTS & TIPS: Best Time To Visit: Excellent year-round. May through November has the best diving conditions, while Humpback Whales visit December through April.

Topside Climate: Considered one of the most pleasant in the world. Comfortably balmy and warm year-round with northeasterly tradewinds. Near the coast temperatures range from 68 to 83°F. Midway Atoll experiences a more seasonal climate. Summer air temperatures are similar to the Hawaiian Islands, but winter temperatures can drop into the low 60s°F with strong winds making it seem even colder. **Water Temperature:** 74 to 82°F (average of 78°F). The waters are generally calm year-round, but winter brings heavy surf and big swells on the north-facing beaches. Warning flags are posted to alert swimmers and surfers of beach conditions. Midway water temperatures may reach 80°F in August, but will drop to 65°F in January. **Exchange Rate:** USD is easily—too easily—accepted. **Time**

Difference: Eastern Standard Time minus 6 hours (5 during daylight-saving).

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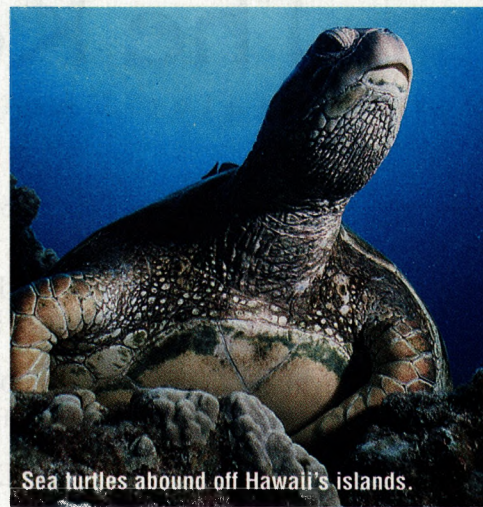
Kona

Without a doubt, the best known dive on the Big Island, possibly in all of Hawaii, has been the night dive with Mantas off the Kona Surf Hotel. As many as a dozen extra large Pacific Mantas would cruise under the hotel's spotlight and feed on the plankton it attracted. As awesome as it was predictable, this dive was one of the few places on the planet where Mantas were guaranteed night after night. Unfortunately, the hotel closed down, and the light was snuffed out. Opportunistic dive guides started a night foray with Mantas offshore from the Kona airport, but it hasn't caught on as well. Talk of the Kona Surf reopening has divers hopeful. Helpful hint to dive operators: Get together and pay the electric bill for that light and re-establish one of the best night dives in the world. Kevin Costner knew big lights had drawing power. Turn 'em on, and they will come.

Up and down the Kona Coast, big critters are always a possibility. Sharks are pretty frequent (including hammerheads) as well as dolphins, whales, big eels and rays. Small stuff like lionfish, scorpionfish and octopus also fill the bill.

Hilo

The neglected stepchild of the Big Island, Hilo gets little recognition. However, if turtles turn you on, Hilo is the place. With more turtles than anywhere and some unique reef dives, the eastern shore deserves more than its Rodney Dangerfield rep. For the totally crazed, a special lava dive can be arranged to swim with live magma. It's iffy, though, as conditions have to be perfect.



Sea turtles abound off Hawaii's islands.

volcano. The walls of the crater had a keen reputation for sponge and black coral growth, but that wasn't what had my bladder busting. There were reports of many, many sharks. You gotta remember, this was back when we still feared sharks. Yeah, I know, today people pay big bucks to watch manly divemasters hand-feed sharks and treat them like puppy dogs. Not us. We scurried back to the boat when a baby Whitetip Reef Shark came close. Now, we divers have gone shark crazy, and Molokini still medicates that insanity. In fact, it's grown into Maui's hottest dive site, probably because it offers

clear, calm water and a decent chance to sight Humpback Whales (usually in winter), Pilot Whales, dolphins and a crowd of little critters like endemic White Spot Damsels. It doesn't hurt that Molokini is a Marine Life Conservation District, which bans taking any marine life whatsoever.

From Molokini we beat upwind through the sailor's challenge: the Molokai Channel (between Maui and Molokai). Massive rollers poured through the cut, but the Danish-built *Lillie Dansker* pounded ahead, throwing sheets of water from bow to stern. It was our first decent shower in days.

Out to Midway

Beyond Kauai, the Hawaiian chain extends more than 1,000 miles westward. The islands get older and smaller and have vast virgin areas. Some are uninhabited, some are restricted, and some are so overrun with sharks that diving is not advised. Galapagos Sharks are guaranteed to be seen. Midway is also home to the rare, endemic Masked Angelfish, a deep-water dweller which comes up to as shallow as 30 feet around the island. You'll find plenty of lobsters, eels, squirrelfish and the weird Morwong.



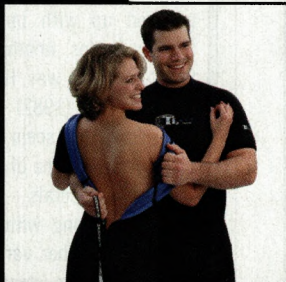
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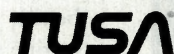
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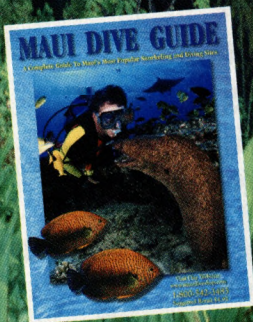
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Oahu

Beyond the steady flow of the sunburnt, flowered-shirt crowd, Oahu has some surprisingly great diving—even right offshore from the glistening bikinis of Waikiki. The wreck of the *YO-257*, a former Navy ship, was sunk off the beach in 1989 for tourists on the Atlantis submarine tour. For divers, it's easily accessible and has grown a nice quilting of colorful corals and sponges. It's also pumped up with butterflyfish, eels and friendly turtles. Another popular wreck, the 800-ton *Mahi*, was Hawaii's first planned artificial reef (1982) and has a school of Eagle Rays that seem to have moved in. It's also covered in one of Hawaii's most prolific and stunning corals—Orange Cup Corals, or *Tubestrea*. Along with a newer wreck, the Corsair and other various hunks of metal, Oahu wears the crown as the undisputed wreck capital of the island chain.

The North Shore is the winter home of gonzo surfers at their Sangria La, the Bonsai Pipeline. When the Big Kahuna waves roll in the diving is *kaput*, but when it smoothes out, the North Shore has some of the island's most unspoiled dives. The same is true of the windward (northeast) side of Oahu.

For pure snorkeling fun, Oahu divers can trek to Hanauma Bay where Elvis filmed *Blue Hawaii*. It's worth the trip just to walk the same beach where the King dug his tootsies in the sand.

We eventually made our way around to Maui's north shore, ready to find some drinks with real ice and some funky nightlife. We thumbed a ride to Lahaina, thinking that if Loggins and Messina sang about it, there had to be at least one good bar. To our great pleasure, there were many. By the time we were ready to stumble back to the boat, all hope of hitchhiking or cab rides were futile. Always quick with a plan, Becky distracted a security guard, and we commandeered a golf cart from a fancy resort. With six of us piled on-board, the electric engine whined in obvious pain, but got us back to the harbor by sunrise. It was time to head for Molokai.

We sailed to the island's north coast, re-

plete with sheer 3,000-foot-high cliffs and frothy seas churning against the hard rock. As we gingerly picked our way along Molokai's spectacularly dangerous shoreline, we were dumbstruck at how passing clouds got snagged on jagged peaks and the abundance of spouting waterfalls.

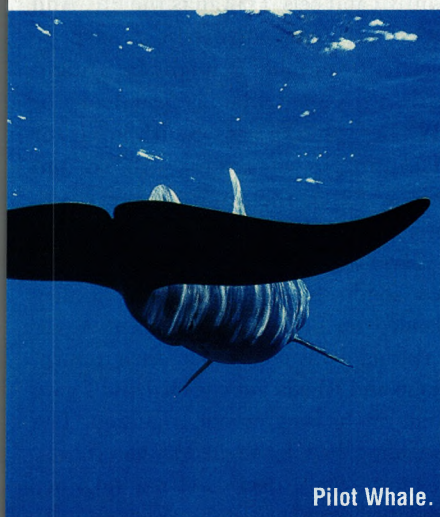
That afternoon, John and Clay rode a choice break while I dived reefs bursting with sea critters. Fields of Antler Coral seemed to go on forever, and lobsters hid in every hole. Even now, when I hear people talk about virgin reefs, I flash back to Kalaupapa.

Maui

Ironically, Maui's best diving is not on Maui, but on neighboring islands Lanai and Molokini crater. Both are well worth the trip, with great possibility for big animals. Molokini is a crescent-shaped remnant of the now dormant Haleakala volcano. It takes operators about 20 minutes from Kihei and 45 minutes to an hour from Lahaina. Rising 160 feet out of the sea, the crater drops into 35 feet of water, slopes to 70, then drops off to about 300 feet. Known for pelagics as well as small critters, Molokini's drama has perhaps made it Hawaii's most popular dive. Its shallow reefs are also a favorite snorkeling spot.

A couple of dozen sites have also been established on the south shore and a few on the western and eastern sides.

Although special permits are required and hard to come by, Humpback Whales pass by Maui each year, offering some of the world's best encounters in super clear water. Lots of the great Humpback footage and photos you see on TV and in magazines come from these waters.



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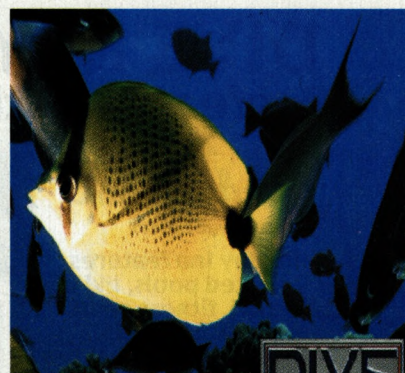
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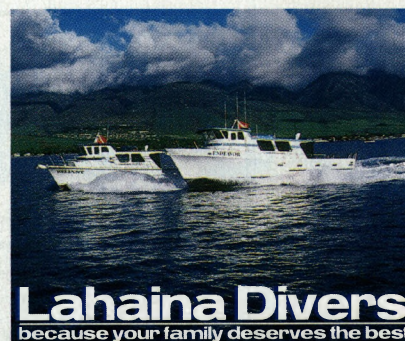
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Kauai & Ni'ihau

The westernmost of the "main" Hawaiian Islands, Kauai is known as the Garden Isle. Popular for its lush mountainsides, hundreds of waterfalls and secluded beaches, diving along the spectacular Na Pali cliffs on the north shore is outstanding (weather permitting). One of those sites is Ke'e Lagoon, a great snorkel and shallow dive. There's also good, accessible diving on the east and south shores near Linhue and Koloa.

About 20 miles west of Kauai, the island of Ni'ihau (the Forbidden Isle) is about as virgin as diving gets, but getting there is the trick. It may take three hours or more, and that's generally only in summer when the sea is "calm." Only a couple of dozen folks live there, all of pure Hawaiian lineage, so this is Hawaii without crowds on land or underwater. At the northern tip of Ni'ihau is Lehua Rock, a submerged crater with great diving. Mr. Sharky likes to hang out at the rock as well as all around Ni'ihau. Lucky visitors may also encounter the rare and endangered Monk Seals. Once near extinction, the Monk's population seems to be coming back and sightings have become more frequent.

We sailed out shortly thereafter, and back in Honolulu. I reflected on the most incredible two weeks of my young life. I'd eaten rock slugs, learned some cool songs for my buds back home and dipped my toe into some amazing diving. I vowed to return and see the rest. Over the past 20 or so years, I've done just that. From Kona to Kauai, I've fallen in love with Hawaii and its infinite ocean. From Oceanic Whitetips, Mantas, dolphins, turtles and whales to frogfish, Spanish Dancers, scorpionfish and eels, Hawaii is the life. And with each new dive trip, a surprise seems to unfold. It might be a night dive with giant Mantas near Kona or Whale Sharks at Southpoint or Humpbacks off Maui. Above and below water, the rewards keep stacking up and dragging me back.

Two weeks later, John and Clay blasted south. After 39 days at sea they landed on Bora Bora and spent a year cruising Polynesia. Upon their return, John and Rhoda got engaged and I gave him my blessing on one condition: The wedding had to be in Hawaii. It was. Unfortunately, Becky did not sing, nor did they serve *opehi* at the reception.

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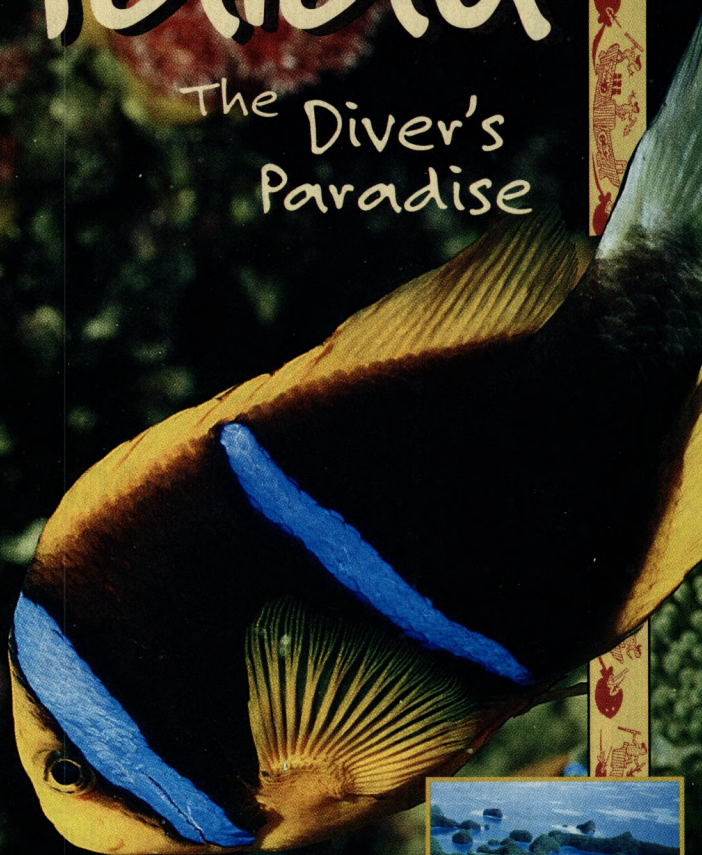
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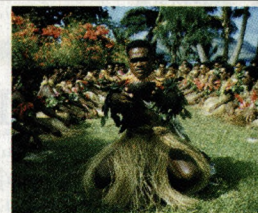


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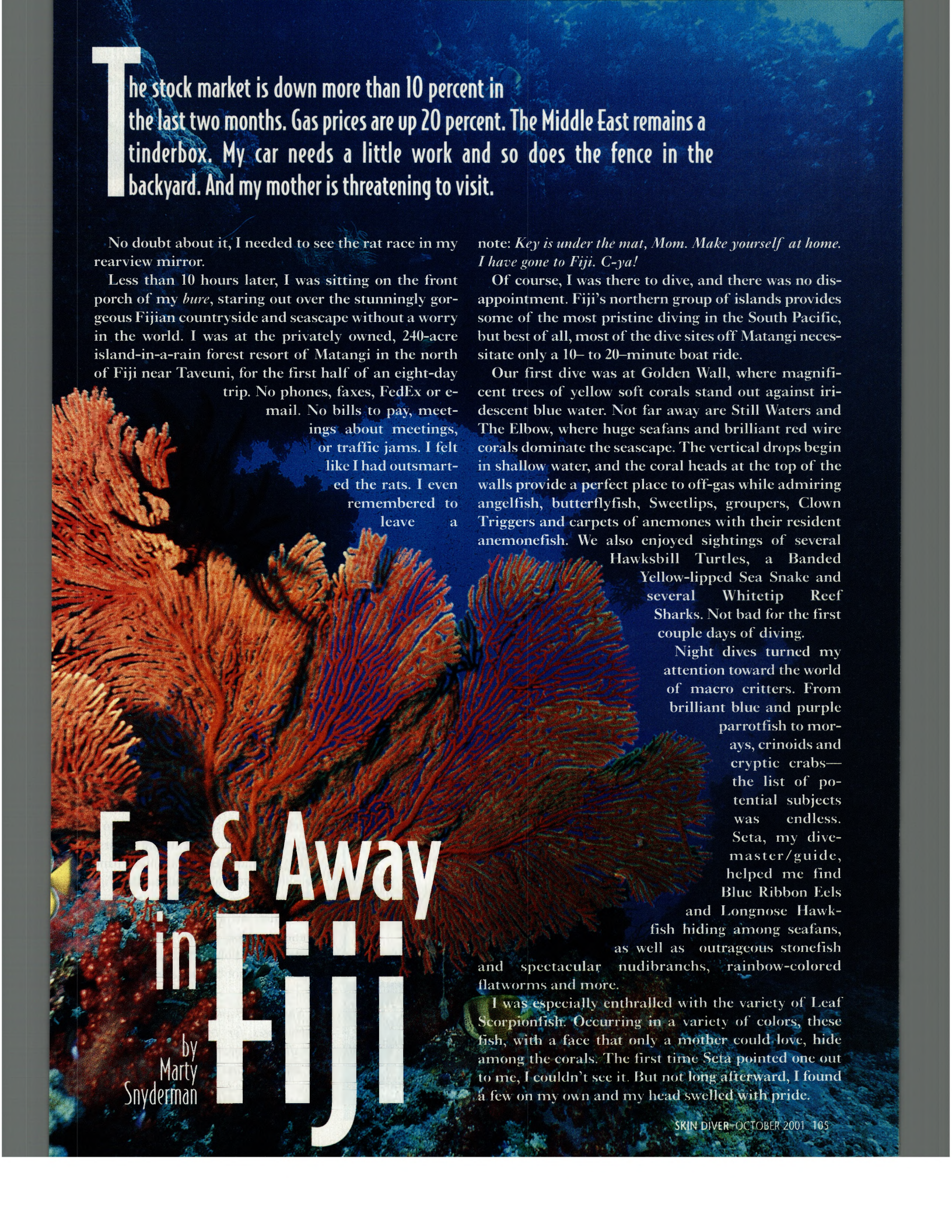
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The stock market is down more than 10 percent in the last two months. Gas prices are up 20 percent. The Middle East remains a tinderbox. My car needs a little work and so does the fence in the backyard. And my mother is threatening to visit.

No doubt about it, I needed to see the rat race in my rearview mirror.

Less than 10 hours later, I was sitting on the front porch of my *bure*, staring out over the stunningly gorgeous Fijian countryside and seascape without a worry in the world. I was at the privately owned, 240-acre island-in-a-rain forest resort of Matangi in the north of Fiji near Taveuni, for the first half of an eight-day trip. No phones, faxes, FedEx or e-mail. No bills to pay, meetings about meetings, or traffic jams. I felt like I had outsmarted the rats. I even remembered to leave a

note: Key is under the mat, Mom. Make yourself at home. I have gone to Fiji. C-ya!

Of course, I was there to dive, and there was no disappointment. Fiji's northern group of islands provides some of the most pristine diving in the South Pacific, but best of all, most of the dive sites off Matangi necessitate only a 10- to 20-minute boat ride.

Our first dive was at Golden Wall, where magnificent trees of yellow soft corals stand out against iridescent blue water. Not far away are Still Waters and The Elbow, where huge seafans and brilliant red wire corals dominate the seascape. The vertical drops begin in shallow water, and the coral heads at the top of the walls provide a perfect place to off-gas while admiring angelfish, butterflyfish, Sweetlips, groupers, Clown Triggers and carpets of anemones with their resident anemonefish. We also enjoyed sightings of several Hawksbill Turtles, a Banded Yellow-lipped Sea Snake and several Whitetip Reef Sharks. Not bad for the first couple days of diving.

Night dives turned my attention toward the world of macro critters. From brilliant blue and purple parrotfish to morays, crinoids and cryptic crabs—the list of potential subjects was endless. Seta, my dive-master/guide, helped me find Blue Ribbon Eels

and Longnose Hawkfish hiding among seafans, as well as outrageous stonefish and spectacular nudibranchs, rainbow-colored flatworms and more.

I was especially enthralled with the variety of Leaf Scorpionfish. Occurring in a variety of colors, these fish, with a face that only a mother could love, hide among the corals. The first time Seta pointed one out to me, I couldn't see it. But not long afterward, I found a few on my own and my head swelled with pride.

Far & Away in Fiji

by
Marty
Snyderman

On my last day at Matangi, Nigel Douglas, Matangi-native and the owner of the dive concession, took us to the Somosomo Strait to make a dive on the famed White Wall, where white soft corals proliferate. The wall, part of the Rainbow Reef system that extends between Taveuni and the island of Vanua Levu, provided a wonderful dive, but the real bonus of the day was spending a couple of hours snorkeling with a pod of Killer Whales. The whales were lazily making their way down the strait and soon became curious about us. At

first the large males stayed between us and the cows with calves, but after 30 minutes or so we were able to get great looks at all the whales. Time after time, the closest whale would roll slightly onto its side in order to eyeball us.

The next day, I island-hopped to the south of Fiji, to a relatively new resort named Lalati in the heart of Beqa (*Beng-ga*) Lagoon.

Inside the 16-mile-wide lagoon, the best diving is on a wide array of hill-like coral heads and in the canyons between the heads. This is the big dif-

Skin Diver GUIDE - Fiji

GETTING THERE: From the U.S., Air New Zealand, (800) 262-1234, and Air Pacific, (800) 227-4446, service Fiji with weekly flights. Inter-island travel is also possible with Air Pacific and Sun Air, (800) 294-4864.



FIJI FACTS & TIPS:

Best Time To Visit: Today. Tomorrow. Any time.

Topside Climate: Tropical, but it does rain often and can be breezy and cool.

Water Temperature: Typically 76 to 83°F.

Exchange Rate: 1.00 (USD) = 2.31 (FJD) Fiji Dollars. The U.S. dollar is accepted at many major resorts, but it is best to have some local currency when travelling.

Time Difference: Eastern Standard Time plus 17 hours.

Dive Operators & Live-aboards: South Seas Adventures (800) 576-7327 www.south-seas-adventures.com • Tropical Dive (Fiji Scuba), www.fijiscuba.com • Fiji Aggressor (800) 348-2628 www.aggressor.com • Nai'o (800) 903-0272 www.Naia.com.fj

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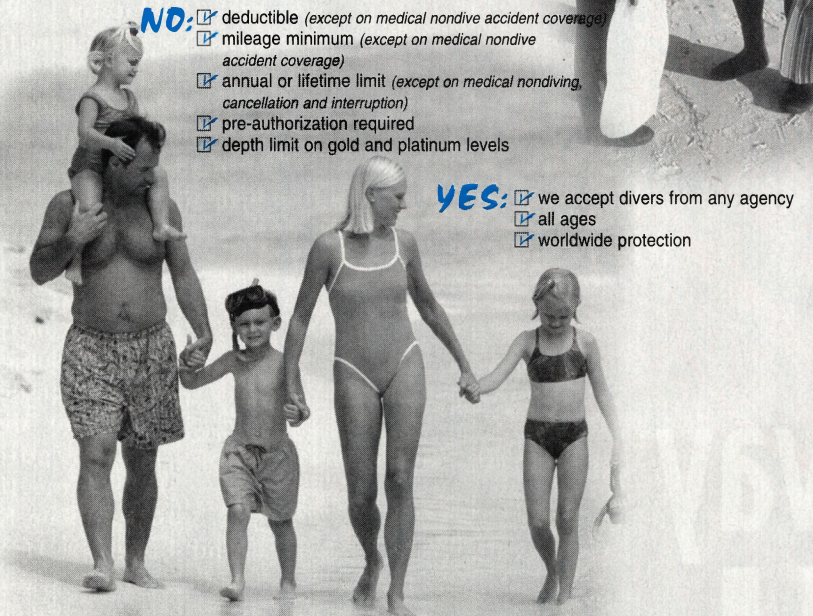
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ference between the diving in the north and south of Fiji. But once again, the bommies (South Pacific-speak for coral heads) are covered with soft corals and seafans, which in turn, provide ideal places for feeding crinoids to perch themselves when the current is running.

The setting is nothing short of spectacular, and the names of the dive sites—Nudibranch City, Chris' Favorite, Carpet Cove and Simple Green—provide insight into the feature attractions, variety of wildlife and the ease of the diving. The coral heads almost reach the surface and quickly fall off to depths of 25 to 80 feet where most of the diving occurs.

If you want casinos, all-night bands, gambling and hustle and bustle, Fiji is not your place. But if you want peace and quiet, on a remote, yet stunning island paradise where you can enjoy some of the South Pacific's finest diving, Fiji cannot be surpassed. 🐟

Special thanks to South Seas Adventures for trip coordination, Air Pacific and Sun Air for providing air travel, and Matangi Island Resort, Tropical Dive (Fiji Scuba) and Lalati for diving arrangements and accommodations.

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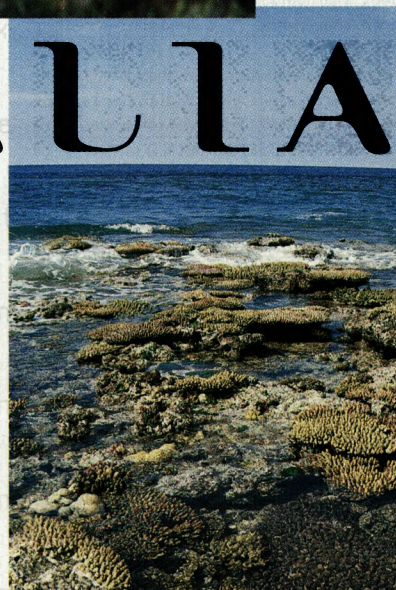
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NAVIGATING IN YOUR OPEN WATER CLASS IS RELATIVELY easy. Follow your instructor, and you'll end up back at the boat. But, unfortunately for many divers, this is the extent of navigation skills learned during training. Knowing where you are underwater enhances safety and prevents surfacing multiple times to determine your position, which could contribute to decompression sickness. Here are some tips on making navigation a no-brainer.

Keep it Simple

Complex patterns cause confusion and error. The simplest way to go from point A to point B is to go out in a straight line and come back the same way (known

Navigation Made Easy



Navigation Know-How

- Have a dive pattern in mind for every dive.
- Know your dive site—listen to pre-dive briefing.
- Pay attention to your surroundings—use natural references as landmarks.
- Use an underwater timer or tank pressure gauge between transition points.
- Give yourself a break—coming within a few feet of your point of origin is good.
- The compass is always right.

need to shorten the dive, you have a good idea of which direction to go to find your point of origin.

And remember, you don't have to end up within six inches of where you started. Dive patterns are estimations. For example, when navigating back to a boat,

as a reciprocal course). More interesting and easier patterns to follow are square or rectangular patterns, which require four, pre-planned 90° turns.

The easiest way to approach this kind of navigation is to form an image in your mind of your dive pattern. If you're running a box course, picture in your mind where you are in relation to your point of origin. That way, if you

be aware that it may shift position while at anchor. So even if you come back to the exact spot where you began, there's a chance the boat may have swung 100 feet away, and that's OK.

Kicks, Time & Air

You can also measure distance by using kick cycles, time and tank pressure readings. Measuring distance with kicks requires the diver to count kick cycles (or sets of two single-leg kicks). But remembering where you are in the count while trying to enjoy your dive can be impossible and frustrating. It's sometimes easier to use an underwater timer. If you run a box where each leg is five minutes long, you'll end up pretty close to where you started. If you don't have a timer, use your air as a measuring device. For example, make each leg 500 psi, swim four legs, and you'll return to the vicinity of the starting point.

Natural References

Using natural references in conjunction with a dive pattern will help ensure a safe return. It is important for divers to have some idea of the dive area prior to diving, so pay close attention to pre-dive briefings. Natural walls, reefs, sand ripples (which run parallel to the shore), seafans and algae (various types grown at only specific depths) are examples of good natural references.

Don't Bury Your Head in a Compass

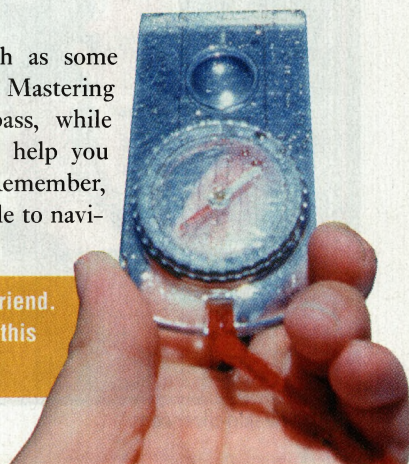
Use your compass to point you in the right direction, take a look ahead, drop the compass and swim in that direction. Checking your compass every few minutes to make sure you're still heading in the right direction should be good enough.

But if you do get caught up in the reverie of the dive and become disoriented, remember that the compass is *always* right. You may get turned around and be convinced that the wrong way is really the right way. Trust your compass.

Practice, Practice

Navigation is not as tough as some divers have come to believe. Mastering dive patterns and the compass, while using natural references, will help you become an ace navigator. Remember, practice is the key to being able to navigate safely and effectively. 🐟

Right: The compass—a faithful friend.
Above: Don't find yourself doing this 60 feet under, with 500 psi left.

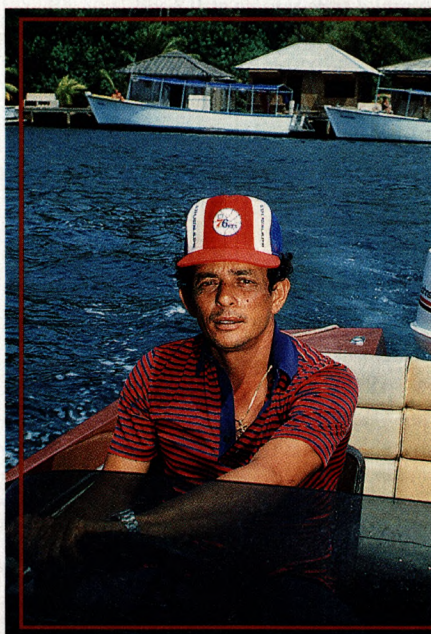


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milestones by scott d. jones

Clement Lee—"Sabah's Diving Ambassador"

HE'S BEEN CALLED "SABAH'S DIVING AMBASSADOR," AND FEW could argue about Clement Lee's leadership role and the subsequent growth of scuba tourism in Asia during the last 18 years. He started his career working with boats and outboard engines, but the lure of the underwater world changed his life forever. With partners Randy Davies and Ron Holland, Lee formed Borneo Divers and Sea Sports (Sabah). Operating under the philosophy of offering visitors quality instruction and a top-notch experience, the dive operation quickly became a model for dive resorts around the world. Lee, one of the first PADI Course Directors in Malaysia, currently serves with the Sabah Tourism Promotion Corporation, is Vice President of the Malaysian Sport Diving Association, and was recently recognized by the Sabah government for his commitment and dedication to tourism. A valued leader in the dive industry, Lee continues to promote diving in Asia. 🐟



Julio Galindo—Keeping Roatan on the Map

BACK IN THE LATE 1960S AND EARLY 1970S, JULIO GALINDO WAS THE MAYOR of the then-relatively-unknown municipality of Roatan, Honduras. The remote island had no roads and no telephones, but that would soon change. Galindo helped an entrepreneur named Paul Adams build Anthony's Key Resort. After many years managing the resort, Galindo and his family purchased it in 1980 and helped oversee the resort's growth as a premier dive destination. Among his many accomplishments, Galindo was instrumental in the creation of the Roatan Institute for Marine Sciences in 1989, the installation of a recompression chamber, dolphin training and educational programs and the Roatan Museum. The family-oriented business Galindo started continues with his children. They have taken his philosophy of providing consistent quality to create and maintain a top-notch dive resort, and continue to provide the unique atmosphere and quality diving that Galindo helped establish nearly 30 years ago. 🐟

Bob Clark—The Hub of SSI

A SCUBA DIVER FOR MORE THAN 40 YEARS, Bob Clark is one of the early pioneers in dive training. Instrumental in the formation of both the National Association of Scuba Diving Schools (NASDS) and Scuba Schools International (SSI), Clark's contributions to the standardization of diver training included authoring the Open Water Diver text for Jeppesen-Sanderson. The text has become one of the best-selling scuba textbooks in history. Clark's efforts were recognized in 1996 with his induction into the Scuba Diving Hall of Fame and presentation of the DEMA Reaching Out Award. The next year, Clark received the Academy of Underwater Arts and Sciences NOGI Award for Education. Currently the CEO of SSI, he was instrumental in the recent merger between NASDS and SSI. Clark continues to lead SSI as the company introduces innovative concepts, including the award-winning Total Dive Log, the Platinum PRO 5000 Award and the Scuba Rangers program, which is designed to bring more young people into diving. 🐟





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206	PRO DIVE	6*

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93	AQUACOLOR	47
70	BODY GLOVE	Cover 2
205	BONICA PRECISION	5*
210	HARVEYS SKINDIVING	8*
207	IDEATIONS	6*
82	MAX AIR	21
105	PELICAN PRODUCTS	89
204	SEA VISION	5*
73	TUSA	5

U/W PHOTO/ VIDEO

72	IKELITE	4
109	JW FISHERS	92
6	PIONEER RESEARCH	11

ACCESSORIES/ MISCELLANEOUS

138	CUSTOM DIVE BOATS	Cover 4
81	D.A.N. DIVER'S ALERT NETWORK	19
137	JEEP	Cover 3
202	UNIFIED MARINE	3*
118	VICENCIA & BUCKLEY	106

DIVE TRAVEL

71	AGGRESSOR LIMITED	3
77	ANTHONY'S KEY RESORT	25
74	AQUA CAT	9
98	BAHAMAS DIVING ASSOCIATION	53
99	BAY ISLANDS BEACH RESORT	54
76	BLACKBEARD CRUISES	12
85	CARIBBEAN ADVENTURES	27

Reader
Service
No.

Advertiser

Page
Number

83	FANTASY ISLAND	22
115	GREAT SOUTHERN TRAVEL	102
103	ISLAND DREAMS TRAVEL	88
79	JEAN-MICHEL COUSTEAU	14
	KONA	97
208	LADY CYANA	7*,
84	MALAYSIA TOURISM	13
113	MAUI DIVE SHOP	100
91	MIKE BALL DIVE EXPEDITIONS	45
86	NEAL WATSON'S UNDERSEAS ADVENTURES	30
108	OCEAN DIVERS	92
89	PLAZA RESORT BONAIRE	43
106	ROATAN CHARTERS	90
90	ROATAN DIVING YACHT CLUB	45
203	SAFARI DIVERS	4*
114	SEA DWELLERS	102
92	SOLMAR V	46
	STUART COVE'S DIVE SOUTH OCEAN	15
86	UNEXSO	30
86	WALKER'S CAY UNDERSEA ADVENTURES	30
86	XANADU UNDERSEA ADVENTURES	30

TRAVEL GUIDE

139	BILIKIKI CRUISES	109
141	BON VOYAGE	109
142	LAGUNA BEACH	109
140	OUTPOST TRAVEL	109
144	RED SAIL SPORTS	108
145	SITA	107
143	SMALL HOPE BAY	109

MARKETPLACE

123	ARMATO'S	122
124	AQUACOLOR	122
131	AQUAVIT	125
136	BERGER BROS	126
127	B & H PHOTO	123
129	CAPTAIN'S CORNER	124
128	DIVE GODDESS	124
121	DIVE 44	120
122	DIVER SUPPLY OF MACON	121
119	LEISURE PRO	118
133	MARINE CAMERA	125
125	NALPAK SALES	122
126	RESORT GRAPHICS	123
135	SCUBARADIO	125
130	SILENT WORLD	125
	ULTRALIGHT CONTROL	125
135	UNDERWATER PHOTO TECH	125

* Advertisers in regional Southern Diver section.

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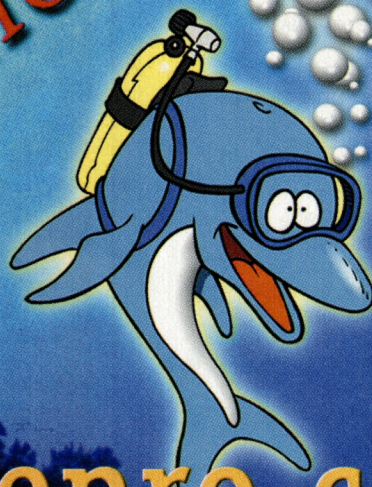
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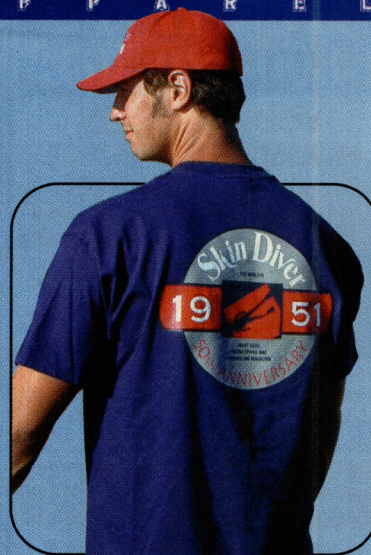
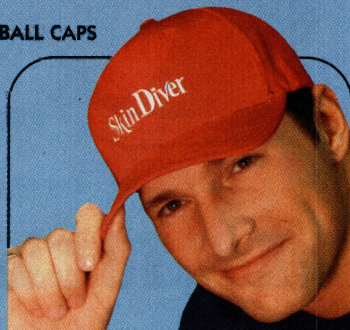
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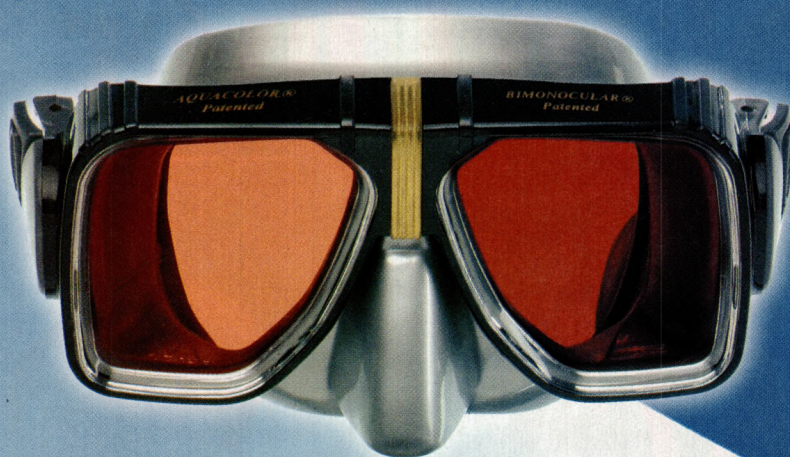
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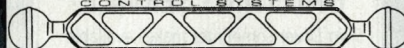
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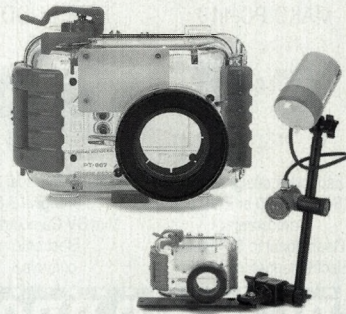
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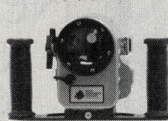
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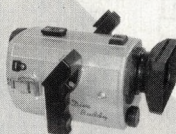
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ENCOUNTERS

Beware the Titan Trigger

BY NED AND ANNA DELOACH
WITH PAUL HUMANN

"DON'T TALK ABOUT YOUR GREAT WHITES OR KILLER Whales," I would declare when divers discussed dangerous marine life. "Those bad boys don't come near coral reefs, and regular reef sharks are rarely a problem unless spearfishing is involved. Barracudas? No more of a threat than tarpon; they just happen to have a nasty set of teeth. Stonefish, sea snakes, Blue-ringed Octopus—deadly poisonous, yes, but who's ever heard of a recreational diver being seriously hurt by one."

And, believe me, I knew. In 30 years of diving I had never been attacked by anything more vicious than a territorial damselfish. Exploring a reef was as safe as a walk in the park. That is, until the day I crossed paths with a Titan Triggerfish (*Balistoides viridescens*).

It wasn't as if I hadn't been forewarned. Titans, the largest member of the triggerfish family, growing up to 30 inches, are notorious for their bad attitudes. And the account of the Tulamben reef where we were diving, by a friend who had arrived in Bali the previous week, came with a single caveat: Beware the Titan Triggers. Just the day before he had been rudely chased and his fin nipped by that very fish. To emphasize his concern, he added a graphic description of the match-

ing scars left by a Titan on the ankle of one of his acquaintances. I took his words to heart, and for the next 32 dives steered clear of Titans. But while ascending the sand slope on my 33rd dive, my last at Tulamben, I witlessly entered

Even before I could trip the shutter, the Titan was on me and headed straight for my face.

I had little choice but to bash [it] with my camera housing...

the personal space of a Titan Triggerfish to snap a photo.

Even before I could trip the shutter, the Titan was on me and headed straight for my face. I had little choice but to bash the oncoming fish with my camera housing, yet the glancing blows failed to slow the savage assault on my wildly contorted backpedaling body. I battled for long seconds pushing and parrying, cussing and kicking, and all the while anticipating the certain pain of Titan teeth. But it was all over as quickly as it had begun. The Titan had become bored with my freakish synchronized swimming. I couldn't believe it; I was unscathed and all was calm once again.

This ol' dog had just learned something new. 🐟

WHERE TO FIND THEM

Found throughout the tropical Indo-Pacific on open sand scattered with coral patches.

UNTIL NOW, THERE HAS NOT BEEN A thorough review of headaches from diving, but a recent publication ("Headache in Divers;" William Cheshire, M.D. and Michael Ott, M.D.; published in *Headache*; volume 41; pg 235; 2001) examines the issue. The authors point to many causes, most are benign, some are related to the diving environment and can indicate a serious diving injury, and some are related to chronic problems aggravated by diving.

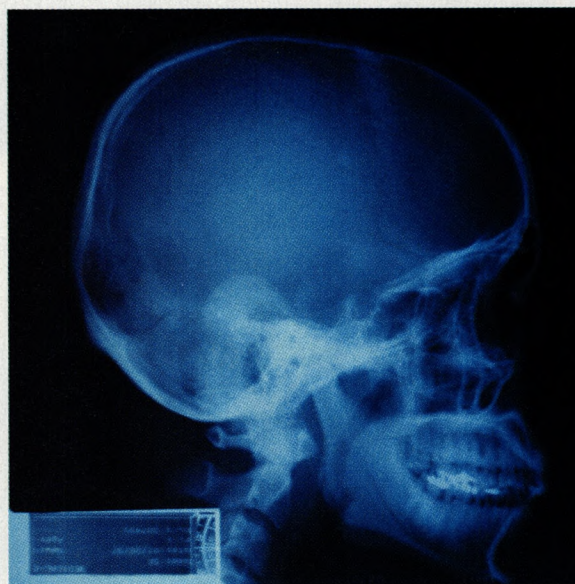
Barotrauma

All of the common squeeze injuries cause pain that could be interpreted as a headache. Mask squeeze is usually obvious because of the redness of the face in the area of the mask and the hemorrhage in the eyes. Injuries are usually mild.

Sinus squeeze is a common cause of headaches during diving. A blocked sinus orifice will cause engorgement of the lining tissue of the sinuses and immediate pain on descent. The pain may be in the forehead or over the

Decompression Sickness

This is the injury that occurs from excess gas in tissues and inadequate decompression. Although headache is not considered a usual symptom of DCS, in some cases, enough bubbles are present to cause brain involvement and headache can become a symptom. The missed decompression is usually obvious and other symptoms of DCS are also present. In the situation where bubbles can cross from the veins to the arteries through a defect in the heart wall (an atrial septal defect or a patent foramen ovale), bubbles can reach the brain and cause symptoms quite similar to arterial gas embolism.



A diver's head is subject to more than a few stresses, the least of which is calculating dive tables. If it hurts, get it checked.

likely to occur with oxygen-enriched gas mixtures, where slow breathing is not inhibited by lack of oxygen, but will cause a rise of CO₂ in the blood. Also, a CO₂ headache is often the first sign of improper use of a rebreather.

Carbon Monoxide toxicity in-

The Throbbin' Noggin

BY FRED BOVE, M.D., PH.D.

cheekbone. There are other sinuses which cause pain in the back or the center of the head, and these should be considered as well.

Headache is a common accompaniment of arterial gas embolism to the brain. This occurs with lung barotrauma, and the headache is often accompanied by other symptoms. These can include visual impairment, paralysis, weakness and loss of consciousness. If you have a headache after a rapid or uncontrolled ascent, you should watch for these symptoms.

Physical Factors

Strain of the neck muscles from tension or anxiety, problems with arthritis of the neck with nerve irritation aggravated by the extension of the neck needed to look forward while swimming underwater, clenching the jaw enough to produce pain in the Temporomandibular joint can all cause a headache from diving.

CO₂ and CO

Carbon dioxide is a common cause of headache in free flowing diving helmets. The flow of air through the helmet is set to keep the CO₂ level low. If air flow is inadequate, the CO₂ level will rise. In open circuit scuba, CO₂ headaches are caused by intentionally breathing too slow. Not breathing enough to eliminate the CO₂ created in the body, will cause a CO₂ headache. This is more

involves the presence of CO in the blood, which blocks oxygen delivery to the brain, dilates the blood vessels to the brain and causes a headache.

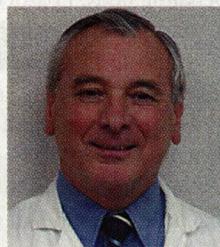
Medical Causes of Headaches

In my practice, the most common cause of a headache is high blood pressure. The exercise associated with diving will often cause an inordinate rise in blood pressure and a headache. Evaluation of a recurring headache should always include repeated measures of blood pressure.

Migraine headaches are another common form. Many migraine headaches are accompanied by visual changes, weakness or numbness of an arm or vomiting. These symptoms, of course, would prohibit diving. However, most people with migraines are aware of the onset of the headache. 🐟

For more information on diving medicine, visit www.scubamed.com.

If you have frequent headaches during or after diving, you should have a medical examination to find the cause, and develop a plan for treatment.



Each month *Skin Diver* looks back through its pages in search of those little nuggets of yesteryear—old equipment, trends of the time, new discoveries—that echo the times and may surprise or shock us. It's good to know your roots and how discoveries of old have helped shape diving today.

1983

Will Sport Divers Be Banned from American Wrecks?



It's a question that was on the minds of many wreck divers in May 1983, when then Congressman Charles Bennett (Democrat, FL) introduced House Bill 69. The bill proposed the transfer of shipwrecks to state jurisdiction as well as a \$10,000 fine for "any person who excavates, salvages, appropriates, or injures any shipwreck." Ellsworth Boyd devoted an entire Wreck Facts column to the bill, saying it was "wordy and confusing," and that his loyal readers should know "what big brother is up to, it rests in your hands to defeat this travesty before it reaches the House...." A call to arms!

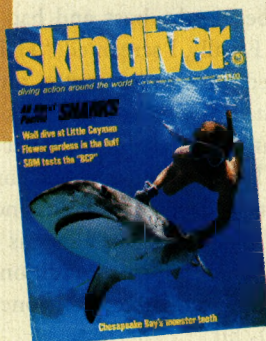
Letters poured into the House and the bill was eventually defeated. 🐟



1975

Not Big Enough to Bite Back Politics

From Chesapeake Bay, MD, *Skin Diver* reported in January 1975 of the amazing recovery of sharks' teeth by three Baltimorean fossil hunters. But these weren't just ordinary fossil finds. The teeth were from 25 million years ago, and they had belonged to sharks that once grew to be "over 80 feet [in length]."



But unfortunately, the time the three men had to uncover a distant past was growing short. The Baltimore Gas and Electric Company was consuming thousands of acres of the Calvert Cliffs area quickly and without mercy. "Ground was broken for a \$150 million natural gas terminal...." Bay residents fought hard, but would lose to the undeniable influx of industry. 🐟

1959

Moray, the Killer Eel

Before there was *Jaws*, there was: moray eel—maneater. In January 1959, Heinz Ulrich warned fellow divers of this "vicious" creature. "Their attack is lightning fast and is usually fatal to its victim," reported Ulrich. Experiments conducted on morays have proven the incredible strength of their jaws—"...a piece of steel will be put in a captured moray's mouth.... The fish will completely break its teeth on the steel and will sometimes hit it so hard that it will drive its own teeth completely through its mouth." Ouch.

Thank goodness for modern science. Once described as "totally indiscriminate as to whether they attack a warm-blooded body or a fish," today it is understood that the moray is not such a threat. Turns out it has extremely poor eyesight. Their alleged aggressive behavior can most likely be blamed on their weak peepers and poor diver etiquette. 🐟



THE DIVING CONDITIONS WEREN'T THE GREATEST, BUT THEY WERE NOT ATYPICAL FOR OUR AREA: ROUGH, choppy seas. I live in Virginia Beach, VA, and we mostly do deep wreck diving off the coast in the open ocean.

I'd been a divemaster for about one year and was almost a certified instructor. This was my 138th dive and a type of dive I'd done dozens of times—a deep open ocean wreck tie-in. I was the divemaster for the day, and was to jump in first, alone, follow the anchor line down and secure it to the wreck so that the other divers could descend safely and easily. No sweat. I'd done it dozens of times. I was so used to this that I was beginning to let my guard down because it'd become routine. This is something no diver should ever do.

Anchors Aweigh

I geared up and went to the front of the boat to jump in at the wreck site. As I was waiting for the anchor to be dropped, I noticed it was a Danforth, not a type I had ever seen used for tie-ins. It is generally used for anchoring boats in mud, not for wrecks, as they are too heavy for a diver to handle in the water.

I didn't ask why this anchor was being used, I just went ahead and followed it down. It happened to land alongside the high, mid-section of the wreck, without snagging anything. I tried to maneuver it to a spot higher on the wreck, but couldn't. It was then that I should have aborted the dive and had another anchor thrown, but I was determined to complete my mission. Finally, I realized this was fruitless and went back to the boat with 1,000 psi. At this point, no real harm had been done. We could have brought up the anchor and changed it, but we didn't. I

- If you're not familiar with a piece of equipment—ask.
- Complacency can hurt you, especially in routine maneuvers.
- Even in a pressure situation, watch your ascent rate.
- Mind your air gauge.

told the mate and captain the situation and told them I'd try one more time. I recall thinking that I didn't want the divers to miss out on a dive.

I went back down and almost got the job done this time. I got down to 300 psi, bound and determined to complete the mission. I was so focused on getting the tie-in done that I didn't care how low my air supply was. When I got to just over 100 psi, I remember thinking, I



am not going to die today. I finally started back up and at 80 feet I recall seeing that I had about 80 psi left. I also remember thinking I wasn't moving fast enough. I moved more quickly and finally got to the surface and miraculously was still breathing from my regulator.

I popped up right beside the boat and had trouble staying on the surface. Finally, I screamed, "Help!" and the mate, who happened to be an instructor, jumped in and got me on the boat. I plopped on the deck and lay there for a long time with people helping me get gear off and giving me oxygen. I was not in very good condition. I was exhausted, had a headache, couldn't concentrate and had trouble breathing. These are all signs of CO₂ excess. I am a CO₂ retainer and this condition can be caused by overexertion. I remember someone said it looked like I took a CO₂ hit.

Someone checked my air, and it registered nothing on the gauge, but I was breathing all the way to the surface. I did use 32 percent nitrox, which is probably what kept me from passing out. How I managed to not embolize is beyond me. I sucked an entire oxygen bottle empty and was "out of it," but conscious, all the way back to shore. The dive was aborted, as other divers had trouble tying in, too. The divers missed out on their dive anyway, and I almost got seriously hurt. I didn't feel better until the next day. In retrospect, I truly believe that having survived this made me a better and safer diver, since I put these lessons I learned into actual practice. 🐟

—BY RANDY EVERETTE

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Southern Diver

Covering the South's Best Diving

FALL 2001

Spring into Fall

by Fred D. Garth

Beat the cold weather blues in your own backyard—escape this chilly season by falling into a warm Florida spring. The water is clear, calm and a constant 72°F in these back-country oases. Here's our guide to seven of the more popular Florida springs.

Photo/Karen Connoy.

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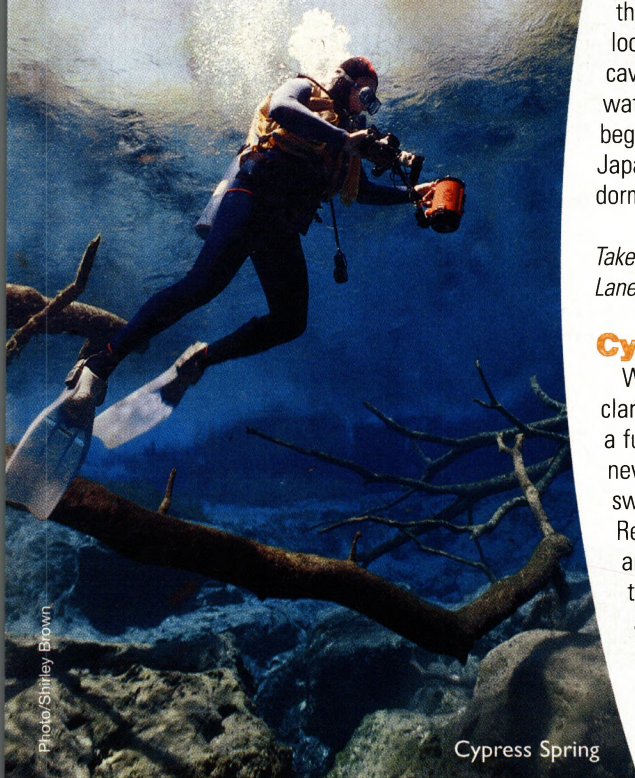
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Photo/Shirley Brown

Cypress Spring

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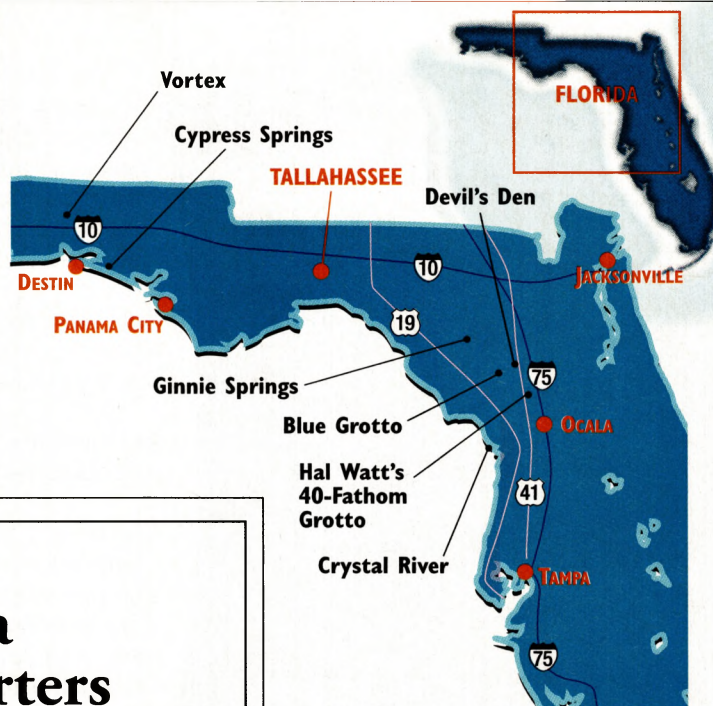
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Take S-79 from I-10 south for 8 miles. Turn left at the sign on Cypress Springs Road, which winds for about a mile to the Cypress Springs office. (850) 535-2960; www.cypressspringsfla.com

Ginnie Springs

Extremely popular with tubers, swimmers, divers and cavers, the Ginnie Springs system includes seven crystal-clear springs along the brown (tannic) Santa Fe River. The 35-million gallon flow comes into the main basin, which is 100 feet across



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and 15 feet deep, and connects to the river via a 150-foot run. Ginnie Cavern, at the bottom of the basin, is considered safe enough for divers of all levels to explore, even with lights, which is generally taboo for divers without cave certifications. But light from the cavern's gaping entrance and a large guideline help divers find their way out. A heavy-duty welded grate keeps divers from entering the cave system. Also included in the Ginnie system are Devil's Ear, Devil's Eye and Little Devil, which pump out 80 million gallons everyday. Dive lights are prohibited except for certified cavers. Ginnie has a full-service dive shop, campgrounds, bath houses with hot showers, a mini market/deli/souvenir shop and even a rental cottage for small groups.

Go south from High Springs on U.S. 41, turn west on S-340 for about 6.5 miles to a graded road running to your right. Go just over a mile to the entrance of Ginnie Springs grounds. Travel straight on the sand road

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The Complete Florida Springs Map and Guide gives full descriptions, directions and facility lists for 91 (yes, 91!) springs.

To purchase:
www.floridasprings.net or ph: (423) 505-3270 or fx: (423) 266-1700.



until you arrive at the Ginnie Springs office.
7300 Ginnie Springs Rd.; (904) 454-2202;
(800) 874-8571; www.ginniesprings.com

Blue Grotto

Don't judge this book by its cover. Blue Grotto looks kinda small at the surface, but opens up into Florida's largest cavern accessible by non-cave certified divers. The folks here have ingeniously boosted the flow from 4 to 22 million gallons a day by using auxiliary pumps to drive in the air-clear spring water. Divers can follow descent lines to three platforms used primarily for certification dives. Beyond those, the cavern begins and your world gets real big, real fast. At the opening, the cavern measures 80 feet across by 30 feet high, then grows to 150 by 40 feet inside. The cavern can easily be maneuvered with guidelines that take you down the slope to the bottom at 100 feet and back up again. A popular attraction is a compressor-fed diving bell on the cavern's ceiling at 30 feet. Divers can poke their heads inside, take their regs out and see what it sounds like to talk while inside a trash can. That's true fun. The Grotto has a full-service dive shop, hot showers and picnic facilities.

Go about 2 miles north from Williston on U.S. 27A. Turn left onto the dirt road, and go a half mile to the entrance on the right. 3852 NE 172nd court; (352) 528-5770

Devil's Den

Unlike the typical picturesque Florida springs with inviting blue surface pools, Devil's Den is a sinkhole hidden in an underground cavern. The center of the roof collapsed eons ago, creating a truck-sized circular hole in the rock thunder-dome. Sixty feet below the opening, at the spring-fed pool, the walls flare out, like an upside-down ice cream cone. The surface of the spring is about 120 feet in diameter. But at 60 feet (the max depth), it's 200 feet across. There are numerous swim-throughs, caverns and multiple skinny cave openings, most of which are covered by steel bars.

Entrance into the cavern is through a man-made tunnel cut into the rocks, leading to a long staircase. The steps end at the dive platform on top of a debris pile (from the collapsed roof) in the center of the pool. Divers circumnavigate the central rock pile, while dodging monster black catfish that thrive in the spring. Devil's Den is open to the public, has a

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Go about 1.5 miles north of Williston on U.S. 27A, and turn right on the paved road indicated by Devil's Den sign. Continue for a mile and turn left at the entrance sign. 5390 N.E. 180th Ave.; (352) 528-3344; www.devilsden.com

Hal Watt's 40-Fathom Grotto

In Ocala, this is one deep hole, *amigo*. It reaches 240 feet, or 40 fathoms, as the clever name describes (the 73-Meter Grotto just doesn't have the same panache). The grotto is not open to the general diving public, but is used primarily for teaching technical diving or for guided divers looking for a good time in a deep, clear chasm. Guided dives are popular, and any instructor or dive-master can qualify as a guide. In addition to a bunch of hardware like motorcycles, airplanes and cabin cruisers to explore, there are thousands of 30 to 50 million-year-old sand dollar and sea biscuit fossils imbedded in the limestone walls. Four platforms at 7, 15, 30 and 60 feet are set up for instruction. This place attracts a lot of divers advancing their certification level. Courses offered include deep air, nitrox, technical nitrox, trimix, full-face mask, rebreathers, drysuits, cavern, cave, gas blending, advanced backgammon and others. Facilities at the grotto include hot water showers, restrooms, picnic tables, grills, classrooms, air, nitrox and mixed gases.

Travel north from Ocala on I-75 to Exit 71. Go west on S-326 for 7 miles to NW 115th St., and turn right. Follow the dirt road for a quarter mile. The grotto is just off to the right. 9487 NW 115th Ave.; (352) 368-7974



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Crystal River

If you're into Manatees, then Crystal River on Florida's west coast is the place for you. People come from all over to gawk at the world's largest congregation of gray blubbery mammals. The best months are November through March, when cold weather corrals 'em into the perpetually "warm," 72°F springs. Recently, to everyone's surprise, a group of 30 or so Manatees hung out all summer. But for guaranteed slow-motion action, go during winter, when temps can dip into the 30s°F or lower. During these cold snaps, hundreds of Manatees can crowd into Crystal River. Grooving with the Manatees is best by snorkel, but for diving, Kings Spring is the only one with any depth—28 feet deep with a cavern that pushes 50. Viz on the river stays between 100 to 150 feet, until the weeds and silt get kicked up by silly land mammals posing as snorkelers.

In the town of Crystal River along U.S. 19, which runs down Florida's west coast. American Pro Diving Center (352) 563-0041; Best Western Crystal River Resort (352) 795-3171; Birds Underwater (352) 563-2763; Crystal Lodge Dive Center (352) 795-6798; Crystal River Manatee Dive & Tour (352) 795-1333; Plantation Inn & Golf Resort (352) 795-7211 ▼

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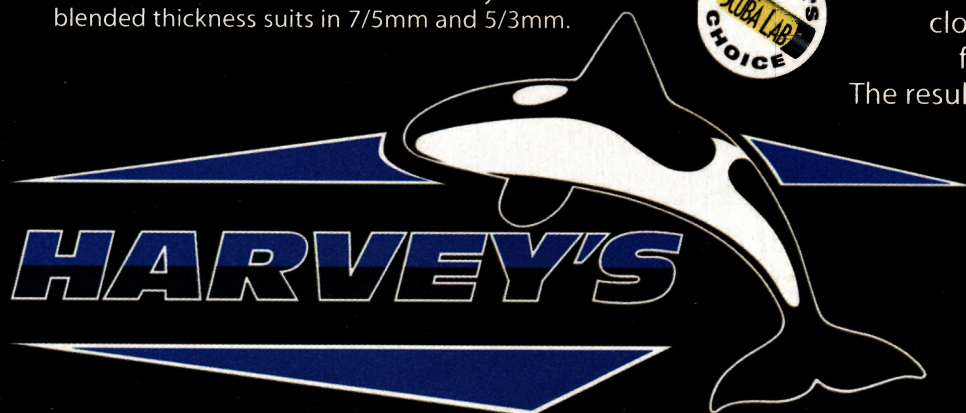
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